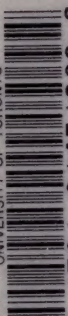


# GREAT POEMS INTERPRETED

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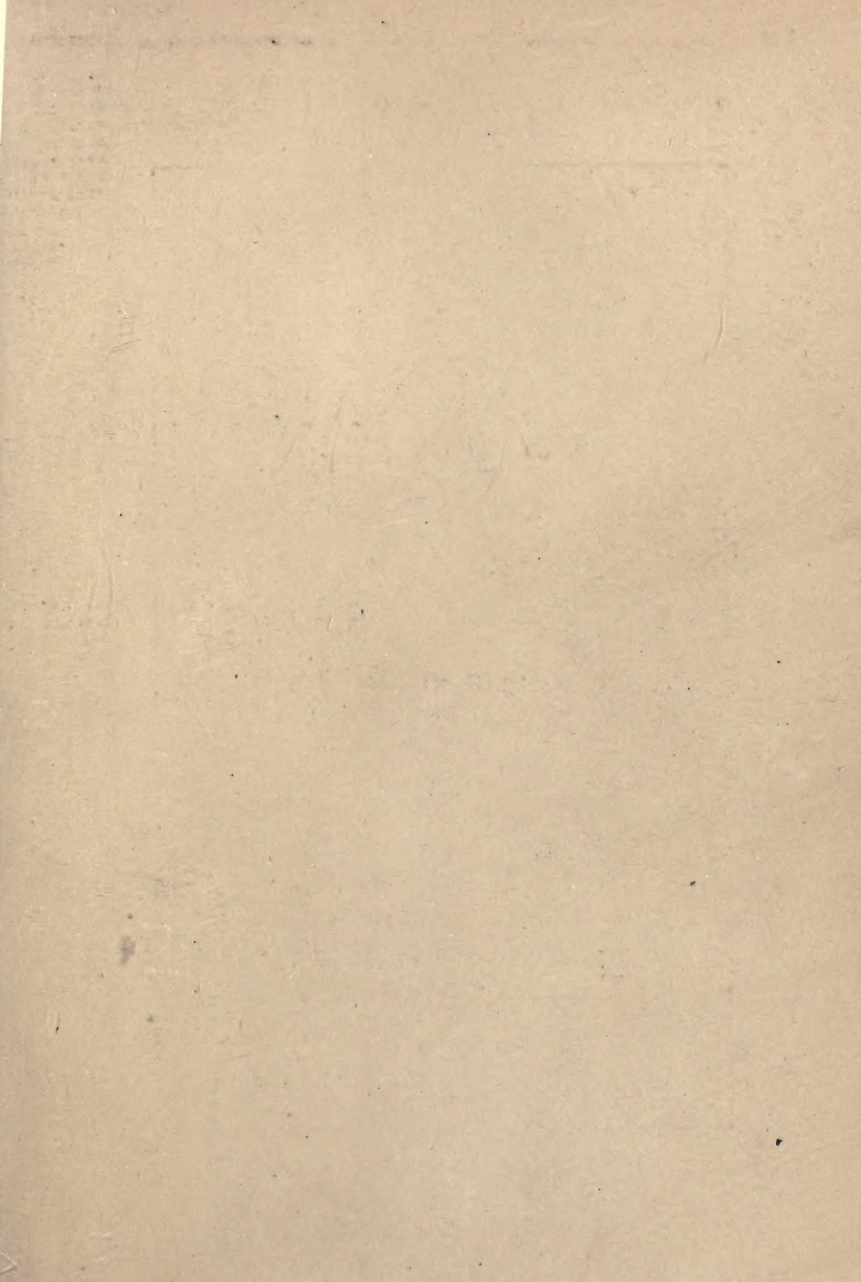
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# GREAT POEMS INTERPRETED

WITH BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES OF THE AUTHORS REPRESENTED

BY

WAITMAN BARBE, A. M., Litt. D.

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH IN WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY

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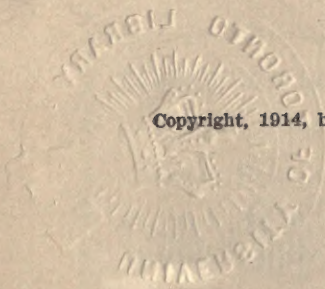
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GREAT FORMS  
INTERPRETED



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## PREFACE

The wide and increasing use which teachers and students are making of *Famous Poems Explained* seems to call for a second volume of the same general character, but dealing for the most part with poems more difficult to understand. It is hoped that the present volume will be found useful in high schools and colleges, and in teachers' reading circles.

Every student of English and American literature is indebted to a multitude of other students; whether or not the present writer has made diligent investigation on his own account, the following pages will show.

Most of these studies were made in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, and for the courteous assistance of the officers of that institution, thanks are here expressed.

W. B.

WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY,  
January, 1914.





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## **Corinna's Going a-Maying**





## CORINNA'S GOING A-MAYING

The joy of this life was Robert Herrick's habitual theme. His special province was the joy of country life. *Corinna's Going a-Maying* is not only an exquisite and enticing piece of writing, but it is the best expression in literature of one of the most interesting phases of English social life; and the poem yields its full meaning only to those who know what May-Day meant during a period of at least four centuries. Horne's *Every Day Book* says: "This was the great rural festival of our forefathers. Their hearts responded merrily to the cheerfulness of the season. At the dawn of May morning the lads and lassies left their towns and villages, and repairing to the woodlands by sound of music, they gathered the 'may,' or blossomed branches of the trees, and bound them with wreaths of flowers; then returning to their homes by sunrise they decorated the lattices and doors with the sweet-smelling spoil of their joyous journey, and spent the remaining hours in sports and pastimes."

Elsewhere the same authority says: "In the 16th century it was still customary for the middle and humble classes to go forth at an early hour of the morning in order to gather flowers and hawthorn branches, which they brought home about sunrise, with accompaniments of horn and tabour and all possible signs of joy and merriment. With these spoils they would decorate every door and window in the village. By a natural

transition of ideas, they gave to the hawthorn blossom the name of May; they called this ceremony 'the bringing home the May'; they spoke of the expedition to the woods as 'going a-Maying'. The fairest maid of the village was crowned with flowers as the 'Queen of the May'; the lads and lassies met, danced and sang together. . . . In a somewhat earlier age ladies and gentlemen were accustomed to join in the Maying festivities. Even the king and queen condescended to mingle on this occasion with their subjects."

In *The Court of Love*, formerly attributed to Chaucer, we read that early on May-Day "forth goeth all the court, both most and least, to fetch the flowers fresh." In the reign of Henry VIII the heads of the corporation of London "went out into the high grounds of Kent to gather the May, the King and his Queen, Catherine of Aragon, coming from their palace of Greenwich and meeting these respected dignitaries on Shooter's Hill."

Henry Bourne in *Antiquities of the Common People*, published 1725, says: "The after part of May-Day is chiefly spent in dancing round a tall Poll, which is called a May Poll; which being placed in a convenient part of the village stands there as it were consecrated to the Goddess of Flowers, without the least violation offered to it, in the whole circle of the year."

The good Philip Stubbes did not approve of these frivolities, but his description of them, in his *Anatomy of Abuses*, 1583, is interesting: "Their chieftest jewell they bring from thence is their Maie poole, whiche they bring home with greate veneration, as thus. They have twentie or fourtie yoke of oxen, every oxe havynge a



sweete nosegaie of flowers tyed on the tippe of his hornes, and these oxen drawe home this Maie poole, whiche is covered all over with flowers and hearbes, bounde rounde aboute with stringes from the toppe to the bottome, and sometyme painted with variable colours, with two or three hundred men, women, and children following it, with greate devotion. And thus beyng reared up, with handkerchiefs and flagges streaming on the toppe, they strawe the grounde aboute, binde greene boughes aboute it, sett up Sommer Bowers and Arbours hard by it. And then fall they to banquet and feast, to leape and daunce aboute it, as the Heathen people did at the dedication of their Idolles, whereof this is the perfect patterne, or rather the thyng itself."

An anonymous writer early in the 17th century says: "In the month of May, namely on May-Day in the morning, every man, except impediment, would walke into the sweete meddowes and green woods, there to rejoyce their spirits with the beauty and savour of sweet flowers, and with the harmonie of birds praising God in their kinde. . . . The citizens of London, of all estates, had their severall Mayings, and did fetch in May-poles; with divers warlike shewes, with good archers, morrice-dancers, and other devises for pastime all the day long; and towards the evening they had stage-plaies, and bone-fires in the streets."

In Shakespeare's *King Henry VIII* there is this reference to the universality of the May-Day custom:

Pray, sir, be patient; 'tis as much impossible  
(Unless we sweep them from the door with cannons)  
To scatter 'em as 'tis to make 'em sleep  
On May-Day morning; which will never be.

When the Puritans came into power they suppressed all festivities, May-Day along with the rest. On April 6, 1644, Parliament ordered:

"The lords and commons do further order and ordain, that all and singular *may-poles*, that are or shall be erected, shall be taken down, and removed by the constables, boss-holders, tithing-men, petty constables, and churchwardens of the parishes, where the same be, and that no May-pole be hereafter set up within this kingdom of England or dominion of Wales; the said officers to be fined five shillings weekly till the said May-pole be taken down."

But with the restoration of Charles II came the restoration of May-poles and May-Day festivities. On the first May-Day after the Restoration a May-pole was set up in the Strand with great ceremony and rejoicing; "little children did much rejoice, and ancient people did clap their hands saying, golden days began to appear."

Thereafter for a hundred years no other social custom of rural England was so full of the joyous spirit as the celebration of May-Day. But the custom gradually died out, and has not been observed for perhaps a hundred years, except in a very few places. The *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1822 says: "May-poles are still erected but the May-games are utterly lost." One feature of these games, however, the Morris-dance, still lingers to this day in a few sections of rural England.

R. Chambers, in *The Book of Days*, published at Edinburgh, 1863, says: "One of the London parishes takes its distinctive name from the May-Pole which in olden times overtopped its steeple. The Parish is that of St.

Andrew Undershaft . . . . Stow, who is buried in this church, tells us that in his time the shaft was set up 'every year, on May-day in the morning' by the exulting Londoners 'in the midst of the street before the south door of the said church; which shaft, when it was set up and fixed in the ground, was higher than the church steeple.' During the rest of the year the pole was hung upon iron hooks above the door of the neighboring houses, and immediately beneath the projecting pent-houses which kept the rain from their doors. It was destroyed in a fit of Puritanism in the third year of Edward VI after a sermon preached at St. Paul's Cross against May games, when the inhabitants of these houses 'sawed it in pieces, everie man taking for his share as much as had layne over his doore and stall, the length of the house, and they of the alley divided amongst them so much as had layne over their alley gate' . . . . Scattered in some of the more remote English villages are a few of the old May-poles. One still does duty as a supporter of a weathercock in the churchyard at Pendleton, Manchester; others might be cited serving more ignoble uses than they were originally intended for. The custom of dressing them with May garlands, and dancing around them, has departed from utilitarian England, and the jollity of old country customs given way to the ceaseless labouring monotony of commercial town life."

Robert Herrick lived in the 17th century (1591-1674) when English country life was full of simple, natural, unrestrained enjoyment, and was not the dull sodden thing it has come to be in our time. He was the vicar

of a little country church, and many of his poems contain references to some of the forms of the church. May-Day customs are mentioned by Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Dryden and many of the other early poets, but Herrick's poem is the supreme expression of their spirit as it blossomed with the flowers through the centuries.

## CORINNA'S GOING A-MAYING

Get up, get up for shame! The blooming morn  
Upon her wings presents the god unshorn.

See how Aurora throws her fair

Fresh-quilted colours through the air!

Get up, sweet Slug-a-bed, and see

5

The dew bespangling herb and tree.

Each flower has wept, and bowed toward the east

Above an hour since; yet you not drest —

Nay! not so much as out of bed,

When all the birds have matins said,

10

And sung their thankful hymn: 'tis sin,

Nay, profanation, to keep in —

Whenas a thousand virgins on this day

Spring, sooner than the lark, to fetch in May.

Rise, and put on your foliage, and be seen.

15

To come forth, like the Spring-time, fresh and green,

---

*the god unshorn* — (line 2) — Apollo, the sun.

*Aurora* (3) — the goddess of morning.

*bowed toward the east* (7) — this is one of many references in Herrick's poems to religious ceremonies.

*matins* (10) — morning songs of praise.

*whenas* (13) — whereas; while.

*May* (14) — blossoms of the hawthorn; hence the tree itself: so called because it blooms in the month of May.



And Sweet as Flora. Take no care  
 For jewels for your gown or hair:  
 Fear not; the leaves will strew  
 Gems in abundance upon you: 20  
 Besides, the childhood of the day has kept  
 Against you come, some orient pearls unwept:  
 Come, and receive them while the light  
 Hangs on the dew-locks of the night:  
 And Titan on the eastern hill 25  
 Retires himself, or else stands still  
 Till you come forth. Wash, dress, be brief in praying:  
 Few beads are best, when once we go a-Maying.

Come, my Corinna, come! and coming, mark  
 How each field turns a street, each street a park 30  
 Made green, and trimmed with trees: See how  
 Devotion gives each house a bough  
 Or branch: each porch, each door, ere this,  
 An ark, a tabernacle is,  
 Made up of white-thorn neatly interwove, 35  
 As if here were those cooler shades of love.  
 Can such delights be in the street  
 And open fields, and we not see't?  
 Come, we'll abroad: and let's obey  
 The proclamation made for May: 40

---

*Flora* (17) — The goddess of flowers. Her festival was celebrated at the beginning of May.

*Orient pearls unwept* (22) — dew-drops.

*Titan* (25) — here means the sun.

*beads* (28) — prayers.

*each field turns a street* (30) — becomes like a street full of young people.

And sin no more, as we have done, by staying:  
 But, my Corinna, come; let's go a-Maying.  
 There's not a budding boy or girl, this day,  
 But is got up, and gone to bring in May.

A deal of youth, ere this, is come 45

Back, and with white-thorn laden home.

Some have despatched their cakes and cream,  
 Before that we have left to dream:

And some have wept, and wooed, and plighted troth,  
 And chose their priest, ere we can cast off sloth: 50

Many a green-gown has been given:

Many a kiss, both odd and even:

Many a glance, too, has been sent

From out the eye, Love's firmament:

Many a jest told of the keys betraying 55

This night, and locks picked: — Yet we're not a-Maying.

Come! let us go, while we are in our prime,  
 And take the harmless folly of the time!

We shall grow old apace, and die

Before we know our liberty. 60

Our life is short: and our days run

As fast away as does the sun:

And as a vapour, or a drop of rain

Once lost, can ne'er be found again;

So when or you or I are made 65

A fable, song, or fleeting shade,

---

*cakes and cream* (47) — the universal custom was to eat cakes and cream on May-Day morning.

*left to dream* (48) — ceased dreaming.

*green-gown* (51) — tumble on the grass.

*both odd and even* (52) — a game of chance.

All love, all liking, all delight  
 Lies drowned with us in endless night.  
 Then while time serves, and we are but decaying,  
 Come, my Corinna, come! let's go a-Maying. 70  
 — Robert Herrick.

---

An interesting May-Day custom survives at Magdalen College, Oxford. Every May-Day morning at five o'clock, a Latin hymn to the Holy Trinity is sung on the summit of the college tower by the college choir in their surplices. The choir is considered the finest in England. The custom has obtained for several centuries.

Felix E. Schelling says (*Seventeenth Century Lyrics*): "There are some of us who feel that we could no more spare the dainty grace and beauty of *Corinna's Going a-Maying* than we could endure to lose a book of *Paradise Lost*!"

F. T. Palgrave, in the *Golden Treasury* says: "A lyric more faultless and sweet than this cannot be found in any literature. Keeping with profound instinctive art within the limits of the key chosen, Herrick has reached a perfection very rare at any period of literature in the tones of playfulness, natural description, passion, and seriousness, which introduce and follow each other like the motives in a sonata by Weber or Beethoven, throughout this little masterpiece of music without notes."

Spenser, in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, 1579-80, says:

Is not thilke the mery moneth of May,  
 When love-lads masken in fresh aray?  
 How falles it, then, we no merrier bene,  
 Ylike as others, girt in gawdy greene?  
 Our bloncket liveryes bene all to sadde  
 For thilke same season, when all is ycladd  
 With pleasaunce: the gawnd with grasse, the Woods  
 With greene leaves, the bushes with bloosming buds.  
 Yougthes folke now flocken in every where,  
 To gather May bus-kets and smelling brere:  
 And home they hasten the postes to dight,  
 And all the Kirke pillours eare day light,  
 With Hawthorne buds and swete Eglantine,  
 And girlonds of roses, and Sopps in wine.  
 Such merimake holy Saints doth queme, [please]  
 But we here sitten as drownd in a dreame.





# **Lycidas**



## LYCIDAS

Those who think that poetry should be the spontaneous expression of personal feeling, simple and direct, do not take kindly to Milton's *Lycidas*; but those who enjoy a work of art, finished to perfection, richly inlaid with rare gems from every clime, and profusely overwrought with exquisite traceries, find in this poem a source of perpetual delight. So many are its riches, it must be read again and again before they are fully comprehended. At first they dazzle but do not satisfy. Every gem must be studied in itself as well as in its setting.

*Lycidas* is an elegy for Edward King, one of Milton's college friends at Cambridge, who lost his life in a shipwreck in the Irish Channel August 10, 1637. King was a young man of much promise, a writer of poetry, and a student for the Church of England ministry. Shortly after his unfortunate death Cambridge University decided to publish a collection of memorial verses as a tribute to his memory. At that time such publications were quite common, and it is not to be expected that they were all expressions of deep personal grief. The Cambridge volume, or rather two volumes, appeared the following year and contained, along with thirty-five other tributes to King, Milton's *Lycidas*. The poem is in the pastoral style: it is a pastoral elegy. A pastoral, strictly speaking, is a poem about shepherds and deals with country life in an artificial way. "*Lycidas*" is the name given in this poem to Edward King. It is a com-

mon name in old pastoral poetry for a shepherd, and this is why Milton uses it. The poet represents himself also as a shepherd, lamenting the untimely death of another shepherd (King) whom he loved and who had been his companion. This lament takes the manner of the old classic pastorals and is not at all in the style of a modern English cry of grief. All sorts of personages and characters are introduced, and classic allusions abound in nearly every line. For the purpose of analysis I have divided the poem into nine sections, though it is not ordinarily so printed.

Section 1 (*lines 1-36*) is introductory. He addresses the laurel, the myrtle, and the ivy, — emblems of poetry, love, and learning — and explains to them why he is going to write “once more.” It had been three years since he had written a poem (*Comus*), and he writes now only because of the sad occasion, the death of his friend Lycidas (King). Then he implores the Muses, “the Sisters of the sacred well,” to begin the dirge, for in the same way he hopes that when his own time shall come some “gentle Muse,” or poet, will lament for him. Surely he has good cause to mourn for Lycidas, for they were children together, shepherds together, fed the same flocks, and played the “oaten flute” together, while fauns and satyrs danced; and Damaetas approved their song. Damaetas is a name in old pastoral poetry for the master of the shepherds. It may possibly refer here to Dr. Chappell, a tutor at Cambridge in Milton’s time.

The elegy proper begins with Section 2 (*lines 37-49*). All nature mourns: woods, caves, willows, hazel-copses. The death of Lycidas is to them as the canker to the



rose, the taint-worm to the herds, or frost to flowers. Notice that the objects of nature introduced are such as a shepherd would be familiar with.

In Section 3 (*lines* 50-64) he upbraids the Nymphs for not protecting Lycidas from drowning. He accuses them of not being where they should have been, on the top of Mona (the isle of Anglesey in the Irish Channel) or on the steep nearby where "the famous Druids lie," or where the Deva (the river Dee) flows into the Channel. These are all near where King was drowned. Then the poet remembers that even if they had been there they could have done nothing, for even the Muse herself (referring to Calliope, the Muse of epic poetry) was not able to save her own son Orpheus when he was torn to pieces and his head was thrown into the Hebros river and carried to the island of Lesbos. If the Muse was not able to save her own son, surely the Nymphs would not have been able to save Lycidas even if they had been present.

Section 4 (*lines* 64-84) is a digression. Here Milton interrupts his lament for Lycidas and inserts a passage on fame. The reference here is to himself. "He proclaims his convictions concerning the high office of poet, which his contemporaries regarded so lightly, the dignity of learning and study, and the worth of true fame," (W. A. Verity). What profit is there, he asks, in taking unceasing care and writing serious poetry? Would it not be better to write the popular love-poetry of the period — to sport with the shepherdesses Amaryllis and Nears, as Herrick, Lovelace, Suckling and other poets of the time were doing? Fame may serve as a spur to labor and

hard study and the scorn of delights, but just when fame is about to be attained Fate or Death clips the thread of life. But Phoebus Apollo, the Greek god of song, checks him in this thought and tells him that true fame is not an earthly thing: it exists only through the final approval of Jove, and the reward is in Heaven. Death cuts short life but not true fame.

In Section 5 (*lines* 85-103) he takes up the main theme again and apologizes to the Muse of pastoral poetry for the digression. The fountain of Arethusa typifies Greek pastoral verse and the river Mincius, Latin pastoral verse. He tells the Muse that the strain he has just been listening to, the voice of Apollo about true fame, was a higher mood. Then his tune on the pastoral pipe ("oaten reed") proceeds. He listens to Triton, the herald of the sea, summoning in behalf of Neptune, the god of the sea, a court of inquiry. He asks the winds and the waves what hard misfortune had doomed Lycidas to a watery grave: but they do not know. Hippotades (Aeolus, the god of the winds) answers for them, that the air was calm and that Panope (one of the sea Nymphs) was playing with her sisters on the smooth sea. There was no storm: it was the fault of the poorly-built ship in which Lycidas sailed.

In Section 6 (*lines* 103-131) the chief mourners are introduced. First comes Camus, the spirit of the river Cam and therefore of Cambridge University, "footing slow," for the Cam is a sluggish stream. "The sanguine flower inscribed with woe" is the hyacinth. "Hyacinthus, son of a Spartan king, was killed by Zephyrus and from his blood sprang the flower named after him, on

the petals of which could be traced *ai, ai*, 'alas! alas!' " Last comes St. Peter, representing not particularly the Roman church but the church as a whole. Camus represents learning and St. Peter religion, both mourning for Lycidas. In this section occurs a very severe and a very famous censure of the Church of England. Milton himself at one time intended to take "holy orders," that is, become a clergyman, but the condition of the church disgusted him. Contemporary documents show that many of the clergy were ignorant, indifferent, and drunken. Moreover Archbishop Laud, a despotic and meddling bigot, was treating the Nonconformists, or those who did not believe in the Established Church, with the greatest severity and was at that time preparing a liturgy which was to arouse all Scotland to rebellion. There had been no Parliament for eight years and no check of any kind was put on his actions. These facts must be remembered before the terrible arraignment of the Anglican Church in lines 113-130 can be understood. A study of English history in the time of Milton will wonderfully illuminate this passage. "The grim wolf with the privy paw" is either the Papal party or the Romanizing section of the Established Church, or both. Exactly what is meant by the "two-handed engine" is not clear, except that it is retribution in some terrible form — some two-handed sword of justice which was to fall upon the Church of England. The axe is to be laid to the root of the tree. It should be borne in mind that Milton's deepest conviction was that there should be no such thing as an Established Church or state-paid clergy.

In Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies* (paragraphs 20-25 of the lecture on "King's Treasures") will be found an interesting discussion of this passage. (See notes.)

Section 7 (*lines* 132-165) resumes the pastoral strain. Once more he recalls the pastoral Muse. Alpheus, a river of Peloponnesus, symbolizes the pastoral poetry of the Greeks; the dread voice to which Milton has been listening in the preceding section had checked the course of his pastoral musings. Now he invokes the Muse to bid the vales and streams and hills to strew the hearse of Lycidas with their choicest flowers: primrose, jessamine, pink, violet, muskrose, woodbine, cowslip, amaranth, and daffodil. He eases his grief with this thought, though he remembers, alas, that there is no hearse, the body has not been recovered: perchance it is being borne to the Hebrides, or to where the Cornish giant Bellerus lies, or to where the "vision" or spirit of St. Michael looks toward Namancos and Bayonne in old Castile. The "guarded mount" is St. Michael's off Penzance, and the "angel" to whom the poet appeals to melt with pity and look homeward is St. Michael. Then he appeals to the dolphin (*see* note) to guide the luckless Lycidas home.

Section 8 (*lines* 165-185) is the concluding passage of the elegy proper. In it the mourning shepherd tells the other shepherds to weep no more, for Lycidas is indeed not dead: he has gained eternal life through Christ, through "Him that walked the waves." He is in the kingdom of the blest; all the saints above minister to him and wipe the tears for ever from his eyes. Then, addressing Lycidas, he says that henceforth his spirit shall be the good genius that shall guard the shore where the



ship went down. Mr. Verity says, "This introduction of a Pagan belief immediately after the reference to the Scriptural idea of the 'communion of the saints,' and the Scriptural language, is another instance of that blending of the classics and Christianity which is so marked a feature of *Lycidas*."

Section 9 is an epilogue, in which Milton, still calling himself a shepherd and an "uncouth swain," says that having finished his lament, and the evening having come on, he arose and gathered his shepherd's mantle about him; tomorrow he will set out for "fresh woods, and pastures new".

## ANALYSIS

Mr. W. Bell (notes in "The Golden Treasury") gives the following analysis:

- I. The pastoral proper (the poet sings as shepherd):
  1. Occasion of the poem, *lines* 1-14.
  2. Invocation of the Muses, 15-22.
  3. Poet's personal relations with Lycidas, 23-36.
  4. Strain of sorrow and indignation; the loss great and inexplicable:—
    - (1) Poet's own sense of loss, 37-49.
    - (2) The guardian Nymphs could not prevent it, 50-57.
    - (3) The Muse herself could not prevent it, though he was her true son, 58-63.  
(First rise to a higher mood: the true poet and the nature of his reward), 64-84.
    - (4) Neptune was not to blame for the loss, 85-102.
    - (5) Camus, representing Cambridge, bewails his loss, 103-107.
    - (6) St. Peter, the guardian of the Church, sorely misses Lycidas as a true son, 108-112.  
(Second rise to a higher mood: The false sons of the Church and their coming ruin), 113-131.
    - (7) All nature may well mourn his loss, 132-151.
    - (8) Sorrow loses itself in "false surmise," and hope arises, 152-164.

5. Strain of joy and hope: Lycidas is not dead, 165-185.

II. The Epilogue (the poet reviews the shepherd's song), 186-193.

## LYCIDAS

"In this Monody the author bewails a learned Friend, unfortunately drown'd in his passage from Chester on the Irish Seas, 1637; and by occasion foretells the ruine of our corrupted Clergie then in their height."

## 1

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more,  
 Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,  
 I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,  
 And with forced fingers rude  
 Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year. 5  
 Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,  
 Compels me to disturb your season due;  
 For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,  
 Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.  
 Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew 10  
 Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.  
 He must not float upon his watery bier  
 Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,  
 Without the meed of some melodious tear.  
 Begin, then, Sisters of the sacred well, 15  
 That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring;  
 Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.  
 Hence with denial vain and coy excuse;  
 So may some gentle Muse,  
 With lucky words favour my destined urn, 20

---

*Sisters of the sacred well*, etc. (lines 15-16) — the "Sisters" are the nine muses, the "well" is the fountain on Mt. Helicon, and the "seat of Jove" is the altar there, dedicated to Jove.

And as he passes turn,

And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud.

For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,  
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade and rill :  
Together both, ere the high lawns appeared 25

Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,  
We drove a-field, and both together heard  
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,  
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,  
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright 30

Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel.  
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,  
Tempered to the oaten flute ;  
Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven heel  
From the glad sound would not be absent long, 35  
And Old Damaetas loved to hear our song.

## 2

But, O the heavy change, now thou art gone,  
Now thou art gone, and never must return !  
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves,  
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown, 40  
And all their echoes mourn.

The willows, and the hazel copses green,  
Shall now no more be seen  
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.  
As killing as the canker to the rose, 45  
Or taint-worm to the weaning herds that graze,  
Or frost to flowers that their gay wardrobe wear,

---

*battening* (29) — fattening.

*oaten flute* (33) — symbol of pastoral music.

When first the white-thorn blows :  
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.

## 3

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep 50  
Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas ?  
For neither were ye playing on the steep  
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,  
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,  
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream. 55  
Ay me, I fondly dream !  
Had ye been there — for what could that have done ?  
What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,  
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,  
Whom universal Nature did lament, 60  
When, by the rout that made the hideous roar,  
His gory visage down the stream was sent,  
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore ?

## 4

Alas ! what boots it with uncessant care  
To tend the homely slighted shepherd's trade, 65  
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse ?  
Were it not better done, as others use,

---

*Druids* (53) — Celtic priests.

*Deva* (55) — The river Dee ; King sailed from Chester on the Dee.

*When, by the rout that made the hideous roar.* (61) — Orpheus so offended the women of Thrace by his inconsolable grief for Eurydice that in one of their orgies they tore him to pieces. The fragments were collected by the Muses and buried at the foot of Olympus ; but the head having been thrown into the Hebrus was carried away to the island of Lesbos.



To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,  
 Or with the tangles of Neaera's hair?  
 Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise 70  
 (That last infirmity of noble mind)  
 To scorn delights, and live laborious days;  
 But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,  
 And think to burst out into sudden blaze,  
 Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears, 75  
 And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise",  
 Phoebus replied, and touched my trembling ears:  
 "Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,  
 Nor in the glistening foil  
 Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies, 80  
 But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,  
 And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;  
 As he pronounces lastly on each deed,  
 Of so much fame in Heaven expect thy meed."

## 5

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honoured flood, 85  
 Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds,  
 That strain I heard was of a higher mood:  
 But now my oat proceeds,  
 And listens to the herald of the sea,  
 That came in Neptune's plea: 90  
 He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,  
 What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain?  
 And questioned every gust of rugged wings  
 That blows from off each beaked promontory.

---

*the blind Fury* (75)—here means Atropos, one of the Fates, who clipped the thread of life.

They knew not of his story: 95  
 And sage Hippotades their answer brings:  
 That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed,  
 The air was calm, and on the level brine  
 Sleek Panope with all her sisters played.  
 It was that fatal and perfidious bark, 100  
 Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,  
 That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

## 6

Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,  
 His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,  
 Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge 105  
 Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.  
 "Ah! who hath reft" (quoth he) "my dearest pledge?"  
 Last came, and last did go,  
 The Pilot of the Galilean Lake;  
 Two massy keys he bore of metals twain 110  
 (The golden opes, the iron shuts amain);  
 He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake:  
 "How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,  
 Enow of such as for their bellies' sake  
 Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold! 115  
 Of other care they little reckoning make  
 Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,  
 And shove away the worthy bidden guest.  
 Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold

---

*Two massy keys he bore* (110) — "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." *Matthew* 16: 19. The pictures of St. Peter always represent him with two keys.

*mitred locks* (112) — A mitre is a bishop's head-dress.

*Blind mouths* (119) — "Mouths" here stands for "gluttons," making a powerful phrase.

A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least      120  
 That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!  
 What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;  
 And when they list, their lean and flashy songs  
 Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;  
 The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,      125  
 But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they draw,  
 Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;  
 Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw  
 Daily devours apace, and nothing said;  
 But that two-handed engine at the door      130  
 Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."

## 7

Return, Alpheus, the dread voice is past  
 That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,  
 And call the vales, and bid them hither cast  
 Their bells, and flowrets of a thousand hues.      135  
 Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use  
 Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,  
 On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,  
 Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes,  
 That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers,      140  
 And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.  
 Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,

---

*sped* (122) — provided for.

*lean and flashy* (123) — Poor and insipid.

*scrannel* (124) — harsh, screeching.

*rank mist* (126) — false doctrine.

*draw* (126) — breathe.

*Sicilian Muse* (133) — The muse of pastoral poetry.

*swart star* (138) — The Dog Star.

*rathe* (142) — Early.

The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,  
 The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,  
 The glowing violet, 145  
 The musk rose, and the well-attired woodbine,  
 With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,  
 And every flower that sad embroidery wears;  
 Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,  
 And daffadillies fill their cups with tears, 150  
 To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.  
 For so to interpose a little ease,  
 Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise;  
 Ay me! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas  
 Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled; 155  
 Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,  
 Where thou perhaps, under the whelming tide,  
 Vist'st the bottom of the monstrous world;  
 Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,  
 Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old, 160  
 Where the great Vision of the guarded mount  
 Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold:  
 Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth;  
 And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.

## 8

Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more, 165  
 For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,  
 Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor;

---

*sad embroidery* (148) — See Section 6, line 106.

*monstrous world* (158) — World of monsters, the ocean.

*the great Vision* (161) — Apparitions of St. Michael had been seen, according to tradition, on St. Michael's Mount.

*ye dolphins* (164) — Referring to the familiar classical story that a dolphin once saved the life of the Greek musician Arion.

So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,  
 And yet anon repairs his drooping head,  
 And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore      170  
 Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:  
 So Lycidas sank low but mounted high,  
 Through the dear might of Him that walked the waves,  
 Where, other groves and other streams along,  
 With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,      175  
 And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,  
 In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.  
 There entertain him all the saints above,  
 In solemn troops and sweet societies,  
 That sing, and singing in their glory move,      180  
 And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.  
 Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;  
 Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore,  
 In thy large recompense, and shalt be good  
 To all that wander in that perilous flood.      185

## 9

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,  
 While the still Morn went out with sandals gray;  
 He touched the tender stops of various quills,  
 With eager thought warbling his Doric lay:  
 And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,      190  
 And now was dropt into the western bay;  
 At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:  
 To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.

— John Milton.

---

*unexpressive* (176) — Inexpressible.

*stops of various quills* (188) — Various moods and meters.

*Doric* (189) — The pastoral or Doric style.



Commenting on the words "creep," and "intrude," and "climb," Ruskin says: "No other words would or could serve the turn, and no more could be added. For they exhaustively comprehend the three classes, correspondent to the three characters of men who dishonestly seek ecclesiastical power. First, those who 'creep' into the fold; who do not care for office nor name but for secret influence, and do all things occultly and cunningly, consenting to any servility of office or conduct, so only that they may intimately discern, and unawares direct, the minds of men. Then those who 'intrude' (thrust that is) themselves into the fold, who by natural insolence of heart, and stout eloquence of tongue, and fearlessly perseverant self-assertion, obtain hearing and authority with the common crowd. Lastly, those who 'climb,' who by labor and learning, both stout and sound, but selfishly exerted in the cause of their own ambition, gain high dignities and authorities."

Concerning the use of the phrase "blind mouths" he says: "Those two monosyllables express the precisely accurate contraries of like character in the two great offices of the Church, those of bishop and pastor. A bishop means a person who sees. A pastor means one who feeds. The most unbishoply character a man can have is therefore to be blind. The most unpastoral is, instead of feeding, to want to be fed—to be a Mouth. Take the two reverses together, and you have 'blind-mouths.'"

It is evident of course that to understand *Lycidas* the reader must be well informed in classic mythology.

## Alexander's Feast



## ALEXANDER'S FEAST

or, *The Power of Music;*  
*an Ode in honour of St. Cecilia's Day.*

John Dryden's best-known poem, and one of the greatest of English Odes, is *Alexander's Feast*. It was written in a single night, when Dryden had reached the age of sixty-six. Lord Bolingbroke called upon him one morning, and Dryden said to him: "I have been up all night; my musical friends made me promise to write them an ode for their feast of St. Cecilia, and I was so struck with the subject which occurred to me that I could not leave it till I had completed it; here it is, finished at one sitting." His "musical friends" were the members of the St. Cecilia Society of London who annually, on the 22nd of November, celebrated St. Cecilia's Day. Songs had been written for these occasions by Oldham, Nahum Tate and other poets; in 1687 Dryden had written his *Song for St. Cecilia's Day*. Pope wrote a song for the society in 1708; but much the finest of all is *Alexander's Feast*.

St. Cecilia, the patron saint of music, especially of church music, was a member of a noble Roman family. She was commanded to sacrifice to idols, refused to do so, and was condemned to death, A. D. 230. She was buried by Pope Urban in the catacombs of Calixtus. In 820 Pope Paschal had her body—which was found "fresh and perfect as when it was first laid in the tomb, and clad in rich garments mixed with gold, with linen

cloths stained with blood rolled up at her feet"—removed to the Church of St. Cecilia, which had originally been her house. Beneath the high altar there is a statue of St. Cecilia, representing her body as found in the catacombs. She is regarded as the inventor of the organ, and in the Roman Catholic church her festival-day, November 22, is celebrated with splendid music. Raphael's painting of St. Cecilia seated at a musical instrument while an angel hovers near, dropping flowers, is familiar to everybody; as Dryden says, "she drew an angel down."

Dryden's poem not only represents the power of music but it portrays an event, fairly well established, in the life of Alexander the Great: the burning of the splendid city of Persepolis at the request of the celebrated Greek wit and beauty, Thais. Plutarch thus tells the story:

"When he was about to set forth from this place [Persepolis] against Darius, he joined with his companions in a merry-making and drinking bout. . . . The most celebrated of them [the women present] was Thais, a girl of Attica . . . As the license of the drinking bout progressed she was carried so far, either by way of offering Alexander a graceful compliment or of bantering him, as to express a sentiment which, while not unworthy of the spirit of her fatherland, was surely somewhat lofty for her own condition. For she said . . . it would give her still greater pleasure, if to crown the celebration she might burn the house of the Xerxes who once reduced Athens to ashes, and might with her own hands set the fire under the eyes of the King; so the saying might go forth among men that the little woman with Alexander took sorer vengeance on the Persians in behalf of Greece than all the great generals who fought by sea or land. Her words were received with such tumults of applause, and so earnestly seconded by the persuasions and zeal of the King's associates, that he was drawn into it himself; and leaping up from his seat with a chaplet of flowers on his head and a lighted torch in his hand led the way, while the



rest followed him in a drunken rout, with bacchanalian cries, about the corridors of the palace."

The old historian Quintus Curtius gives the following account of the incident:

"Thais, being heated with wine, told him [Alexander] he could not do anything that would more oblige all the Greeks than if he burnt the palace of the kings of Persia; that they expected this by way of reprisal for those towns of theirs the Barbarians had destroyed. Some of the company (who were also loaded with wine) applauded the proposal: and the king not only heard it with patience, but eager to put it in execution, said, 'Why do we not revenge Greece? Why do we delay setting fire to the town?' They were all heated with wine, and in that drunken condition immediately rose to burn that city they had spared when armed. The king showed them the example, and was the first to set fire to the palace, after which his guests, servants and concubines did the same. . . . This was the end of the noblest city of the east."

Concerning the influence on Alexander of the musician Timotheus, whom Dryden makes the moving spirit of the scene, Quintus Curtius says:

"He was very much taken with Timotheus, who was very famous in that profession, for this man, accommodating his art to Alexander's humour, did once so ravish him by Phrygian airs that he seemed all in a transport, and actuated as it were by some inspiration, hastened to his arms as if the enemy had been just at hand."

The scene in Dryden's poem is strikingly drawn. It is a typical oriental feast or festival; the conqueror is seated on a gorgeous throne, and by his side is Thais, his favorite; about him are his heroes, crowned with roses and myrtles, as was the custom. Timotheus, the most famous musician of his time, is conspicuous among the music-makers. This is the Timotheus of whom it is said that he charged double fees to all pupils who had been taught music by other teachers.

The great musician begins, as was the universal custom on such occasions, by singing a song in praise of the person in whose honor the feast was given. "The song began from Jove," — that is, the song began by relating the legend that Jove was the father of Alexander, having appeared to Olympias, Alexander's mother, in the form of a serpent, and that the conquerer was therefore himself a god. Alexander had some time before this consulted the oracle of Ammon in the Libyan Desert and the oracle had saluted him as a son of Zeus or Jove; "and he returned with the conviction that he was indeed a god." For challenging Alexander's divinity Callisthenes, a nephew of Aristotle, was tortured and put to death. In fact, his father was Philip of Macedon and his mother Olympias, daughter of Neoptolemus, king of Epirus, but his marvelous military feats had made the superstitious think he was more than human. And so the listening crowd shouts, "A present deity!" and "the vaulted roofs rebound." Alexander assumes the attitude and manners of a god, and "seems to shake the spheres" with his might and power. It is a gorgeous, splendid and barbaric oriental picture which Dryden presents.

In stanza three, Timotheus takes another theme for his song, the praise of Bacchus, the god of wine. Meanwhile the effects of the wine itself as well as those of the music are very evident.

These effects on Alexander are mentioned in stanza four. In his imagination he fights his battles over again, routing his foes and slaying the slain. He grows so vain that he defies heaven and earth.

Timotheus, seeing this, changes his tune and checks the Conqueror's pride. He sings a song of pity for Darius, king of Persia, fallen from his high estate, whom Alexander seems to have had some genuine sympathy for.

Next to pity is love, and so Alexander is in the proper frame of mind for Timotheus to sing to him of love, which he does in stanza five, in soft sweet Lydian measures. War, honor, fighting, these things are not to be compared with love. The crowds seem to like this song best of all, and so Love was crowned, but Music won the cause. Meanwhile the conqueror of the world was conquered by wine and music and love.

The climax is presented in stanza six. The master musician undertakes to rouse the king from his drunken stupor with a song of revenge. He makes the ghosts of the slain Grecian soldiers appear in the festal-hall in the form of Furies with snakes hissing in their hair, and calling for fiery vengeance on the Persian houses. The princes applaud, Thais leads the way, the king seizes a torch, and the palaces of Persepolis are burned to the ground. "In a fit of drunkenness, at the instigation of Thais, he set fire to Persepolis, the wonder of the world, and reduced it to a heap of ashes."

Thus, long ago, Timotheus with flute and lyre and song was able to raise a mortal to the skies in his own imagination, but when St. Cecilia invented the organ she was able to draw even the angels about her.

## ALEXANDER'S FEAST

## 1

'Twas at the royal feast for Persia won  
 By Philip's warlike son:  
 Aloft in awful state  
 The godlike hero sate  
 On his imperial throne; 5  
 His valiant peers were placed around,  
 Their brows with roses and with myrtles bound,  
 (So should desert in arms be crowned;)  
 The lovely Thais, by his side,  
 Sate like a blooming eastern bride 10  
 In flower of youth and beauty's pride.  
 Happy, happy, happy pair!  
 None but the brave,  
 None but the brave,  
 None but the brave deserves the fair. 15

## 2

Timotheus, placed on high  
 Amid the tuneful quire,  
 With flying fingers touched the lyre:  
 The trembling notes ascend the sky,

---

*for Persia won (line 1)* — Persia was won by Alexander in the great battle of Arbela, October, 331 B. C., but several other battles were fought afterward. Darius had between half a million and a million men; Alexander had fifty thousand. Darius lost at least three hundred thousand.

The heavenly joys inspire. 20  
 The song began from Jove  
 Who left his blissful seats above,  
 (Such is the power of mighty love,)  
 A dragon's fiery form belied the god:  
 Sublime on radiant spires he rode 25  
     When he to fair Olympia pressed,  
     And while he sought her snowy breast;  
 Then round her slender waist he curled,  
 And stamped an image of himself, a sovereign of the  
     world.  
 The listening crowd admire the lofty sound, 30  
 "A present deity!" they shout around:  
 "A present deity!" the vaulted roofs rebound:  
     With ravished ears  
     The monarch hears,  
     Assumes the god, 35  
     Affects to nod,  
 And seems to shake the spheres.

## 3

The praise of Bacchus then the sweet musician sung,  
 Of Bacchus ever fair and ever young;  
     The jolly god in triumph comes; 40  
     Sound the trumpets; beat the drums;  
     Flushed with a purple grace  
     He shows his honest face;  
 Now give the hautboys breath; he comes, he comes;

---

*belied the god* (24) — counterfeited Jove.

*Olympia* (26) — Alexander's mother's name was Olympias.

*assumes the God* (35) — Assumes the manner of a god.



Bacchus, ever fair and young, 45  
 Drinking joys did first ordain;  
 Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,  
 Drinking is the soldier's pleasure:  
     Rich the treasure,  
     Sweet the pleasure, 50  
 Sweet is pleasure after pain.

## 4

Soothed with the sound the king grew vain;  
 Fought all his battles o'er again,  
 And thrice he routed all his foes, and thrice he slew the  
     slain.  
 The master saw the madness rise, 55  
 His glowing cheeks, his ardent eyes;  
 And, while he heaven and earth defied,  
 Changed his hand, and checked his pride.  
     He chose a mournful muse  
     Soft pity to infuse: 60  
 He sung Darius great and good,  
     By too severe a fate  
 Fallen, fallen, fallen, fallen,  
 Fallen from his high estate

---

*fought his battles o'er again* (53) — His chief battles were Arbela, 331 B. C.; Issus, 333; Granicus, 334; all against Darius the Persian; and the sack of Thebes and the siege of Troy.

*The master* (55) — Timotheus. The words "his" and "he" in the next three lines refer to Alexander, except in the phrase — "changed his hand," where it refers to the musician, who changed his tune.

*Darius* (61) — Darius III, King of Persia, a monarch of mild and amiable character. He was several times defeated by Alexander. He was murdered by the satrap of Bactria and his body was sent to Persepolis by Alexander to be buried with the other monarchs of Persia.

And weltering in his blood; 65  
 Deserted at his utmost need  
 By those his former bounty fed,  
 On the bare earth exposed he lies  
 With not a friend to close his eyes.  
 With downcast looks the joyless victor sate 70  
 Revolving in his altered soul  
 The various turns of chance below;  
 And now and then a sigh he stole,  
 And tears began to flow.

## 5

The mighty master smiled to see 75  
 That love was in the next degree;  
 'Twas but a kindred sound to move,  
 For pity melts the mind to love.  
 Softly sweet, in Lydian measures,  
 Soon he soothed his soul to pleasures. 80  
 "War," he sung, "is toil and trouble;  
 Honour but an empty bubble,  
 Never ending, still beginning,  
 Fighting still, and still destroying:  
 If the world be worth thy winning, 85  
 Think, oh think it worth enjoying:  
 Lovely Thais sits beside thee,  
 Take the good the gods provide thee.  
 The many rend the skies with loud applause;

---

*The mighty master* (75) — Timotheus.

*Lydian measures* (79) — "The designation of one of the modes in ancient Greek music, characterized as soft and effeminate" — *The Oxford Dictionary*. Stanza 5, in which this phrase occurs, is soft, liquid, "Lydian." Notice the feminine or double rhymes.

So Love was crowned, but Music won the cause. 90  
     The prince, unable to conceal his pain,  
         Gazed on the fair  
         Who caused his care,  
     And sighed and looked, sighed and looked,  
     Sighed and looked, and sighed again; 95  
 At length with love and wine at once oppressed  
 The vanquished victor sunk upon her breast.

## 6

Now strike the golden lyre again:  
 A louder yet, and yet a louder strain.  
 Break his bands of sleep asunder 100  
 And rouse him, like a rattling peal of thunder.  
     Hark, hark! the horrid sound  
         Has raised up his head:  
         As awaked from the dead  
 And amazed, he stares around. 105  
 "Revenge, revenge," Timotheus cries,  
     "See the Furies arise:  
 See the snakes that they rear,  
 How they hiss in their hair,  
 And the sparkles that flash from their eyes! 110  
         Behold a ghastly band,  
         Each a torch in his hand!  
 Those are Grecian ghosts that in battle were slain  
     And unburied remain

---

*his pain* (91) — his passion of love.

*see the Furies arise* (107) — Described in mythology as having their bodies covered with black, serpents twined in their hair, and blood dripping from their eyes.

Inglorious on the plain: 115  
Give the vengeance due  
To the valiant crew,  
Behold how they toss their torches on high,  
How they point to the Persian abodes,  
And glittering temples of their hostile gods." 120  
The princes applaud with a furious joy;  
And the king seized a flambeau with zeal to destroy;  
Thais led the way  
To light him to his prey,  
And, like another Helen, fired another Troy. 125

## 7

Thus long ago,  
Ere heaving bellows learned to blow,  
While organs yet were mute  
Timotheus, to his breathing flute  
And sounding lyre, 130  
Could swell the soul to rage, or kindle soft desire.  
At last divine Cecilia came,  
Inventress of the vocal frame;  
The sweet enthusiast from her sacred store  
Enlarged the former narrow bounds, 135  
And added length to solemn sounds,  
With nature's mother-wit, and arts unknown before.  
Let old Timotheus yield the prize,  
Or both divide the crown;

---

*like another Helen fired another Troy.* (125) — Helen, wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta, eloped with Paris, son of Priam, King of Troy. Menelaus to avenge his wrong, induced the allied armies of Greece to attack Troy, and after a siege of ten years the city was taken and burnt to the ground.

*the vocal frame* (133) — the organ.

He raised a mortal to the skies; 140  
 She drew an angel down.

— John Dryden.

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*He raised a mortal to the skies* (140) — by the power of music he raised his hearers from earth to heaven, a familiar figure of speech.

*She drew an angel down* (141) — refers to the legend that an angel left the choirs above to listen to the more entrancing music of St. Cecilia.

Professor Gayley (*English Poetry, Its Principles and Progress*) draws attention to the fact that the rhyme-scheme changes with each new thought thus (stanza 1) a, a, b, b, a, Alexander and his feast; (stanza 2) c, c, c, the peers; (stanza 3) d, d, d, Thais; (stanza 4) e, f, f, Alexander and Thais. Similar changes occur in subsequent stanzas. "While reading the poem, the student should note, for each stanza, three things: (1) the kind of music Timotheus is playing; (2) the effect of the music on Alexander; and (3) the way in which the poet, by word-sounds and metrical effects, pictures objectively the sound of the music, and subjectively and more subtly the resulting mood of the great conqueror." (Gayley.) Observe the frequent metrical changes — iambic, trochaic, anapestic — the varying length of line, as well as the rhyme-schemes and the onomatopoeic effects, used with such marvellous skill by Dryden in this ode. It offers excellent opportunity for the study of poetic technique.

See Browning's *Saul* for the power of music in a noble cause.



## The Bard



## THE BARD

"These two odes *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard* especially the latter, are the most imaginative poetry Gray ever produced, and were distinctly in advance of the age. They were above the popular conception of poetry, and their obscurity was increased by their allusiveness. . . . Their obscurity was ridiculed, and they were freely parodied."— *William Lyon Phelps*.

The *Bard* is still above the popular conception of poetry, and its obscurity is still a stumbling-block. That it is a great poem, and highly imaginative, there can be no doubt; and a careful interpretation will remove all or most of its obscurities. The poem is based on a tradition that Edward the First of England (1272-1307), when he conquered Wales, ordered all the bards to be put to death, to prevent their stirring up the patriotism of the Welsh people with their songs and minstrelsy. Green, in his *History of the English People*, says that the massacre of the bards is a mere fable, but he gives an interesting account of the influence of these ancient Welsh poets in arousing the national feeling. In Book III, Chapter 4, he says:

"At the hour of its lowest degradation the silence of Wales was suddenly broken by a crowd of singers. The song of the twelfth century burst forth, not from one bard or another, but from the nation at large. . . . The spirit of the earlier bards, their joy in battle, their love of freedom, broke out anew in ode after ode, in songs extravagant, monotonous, often prosaic, but fused into poetry by the intense fire of patriotism which glowed within them. Every fight, every hero, had its verse. The names of the older singers, of Taliesin, Aneurin and Llywarch Hen, were revived in bold forgeries to animate the national resistance and to prophesy victory. . . . Once in the pass Consilt a cry arose that the king was slain, Henry of Essex flung down the royal standard, and the king's desperate efforts could hardly save his army from utter

roul. The bitter satire of the Welsh singers bade him knight his horse, since its speed had alone saved him from capture. . . . The hopes of Wales rose higher and higher with each triumph of the lord of Snowdon [Llewellyn]. His court was crowded with bardic singers. Poet after poet sang of 'the Devastator of England.' Lesser bards strung together Llewellyn's victories in rough jingle of rhyme, and hounded him on to the slaughter. A fierce thirst for blood runs through the abrupt, passionate verses of the court singers. The supposed verses of Taliesin expressed the undying hope of a restoration of the Cymry [Welsh]."

In Carte's *History of England*, published in 1750, Volume II (in the Bodleian Library, Oxford) occurs the following:

"The only set of men among the Welsh, that had reason to complain of Edward's severity, were the bards who used to put those of the ancient Britons in mind of the valiant deeds of their ancestors: he ordered them all to be hanged, as inciters of the people to sedition."

Following is the thread of the story in the poem:

As the army of Edward march through a deep valley in Wales they are stopped by the appearance of a venerable bard who stands on a high cliff and pronounces a curse upon the king and his army; the ghosts of a band of bards slain at Edward's command appear on a more remote mountain and take up the curse, combining with it a prophecy of misfortune to Edward's descendants; the ghostly bards vanish, and the first bard takes up the theme once more, foretells the coming of true British sovereigns and still greater poets to celebrate virtue and valor, and to condemn vice and tyranny; his song being ended, the bard leaps headlong from the mountain into the river that rolls at its feet.

The poem begins with the bard's curse upon the king, followed by a description of the scene and its influence

upon the king and his army. At line 33 the bard again begins speaking; he laments the death of his fellow-singers, Hoel, Llewellyn, Cadwallo, Urien, Modred, dear lost companions of his tuneful art, but says that they do not sleep, for at that moment their ghosts appear on another cliff. At line 49 this "grisly band" begin speaking and continue for fifty lines or through lines 49 to 100 inclusive. In these fifty lines the ghostly band "weave the winding-sheet of Edward's race," that is, they predict the disasters that are to befall him and his descendants. They tell how Edward the Second is to be butchered in Berkeley Castle (*lines* 53-56); how Isabel of France, Edward the Second's adulterous Queen "the she-wolfe of France," is to be a curse to him and to the country (*lines* 57-58); how her son Edward the Third is to scourge her own country, France (*lines* 59-62); how that mighty victor Edward the Third, is to die abandoned by his children and courtiers, his son "the sable warrior," the Black Prince, being dead (*lines* 63-70); how his successor, Richard the Second, "the rising morn," is to begin his reign in magnificence (*lines* 71-76), but is to close his life by being starved to death (*lines* 76-82); how the ruinous civil wars of York and Lancaster — the Wars of the Roses — are to bring havoc in their course, with many secret murders in the Tower of London, including that of Henry the Sixth, "the meek usurper" of line 90, in spite of his "Father's (Henry the Fifth) fame," and his Queen's heroic struggle to save him (*lines* 83-94): and how Eleanor, the Queen of Edward the First, is to lose her life, "the half of Edward's heart," by sucking the poison from a dagger-



wound in her husband's side, thus saving his life (*lines 97-99*).

Here the band of ghostly bards disappear, and the bard on the nearer cliff, after imploring them not to leave him thus alone, takes up the prophecy and sees on Mount Snowdon's height as it were the scroll of the future unrolled in visions of glory. He no longer bewails the fact that King Arthur has not returned from fairy-land as predicted and commonly believed, for he sees in the House of Tudor a line of true British kings, they being of Welsh blood (*lines 100-110*). Queen Elizabeth, who was descended from a Welsh chief and therefore of the true British line, is the central figure of the vision in *lines 111-124*. In *lines 125-134* the bard sees future great poets of England—Shakespeare moves "in buskined measure," Milton's voice is heard from "blooming Eden," and the warblings of the succession of poets after Milton's time "in long futurity" strike his prophetic ear.

*Lines 135-142* are addressed to King Edward—and then the bard leaps from the rock and disappears in the roaring tide.

*The Bard* is a "regular", or Pindaric, ode in imitation of the famous odes of Pindar. A Pindaric ode consists of a strophe, an antistrophe, and an epode—or turn, counter-turn, and stand—the first of them supposed to be sung by the chorus as they moved up one side of the orchestra, the second as they moved down, and the third as they stood. Sometimes the epode is placed between the strophe and the antistrophe. The rhyme-scheme of the strophe is the same as that of the

antistrophe, but the epode has a different rhyme-scheme. The strophe and the antistrophe are iambic; the epode, trochaic. The lines vary in number of feet but the strophe and antistrophe observe one metrical scheme and the epode another. Each stanza may contain from seven or eight verses (lines) to as many as thirty or thirty-five, and thus the rhyme-scheme is sometimes very complex.

## THE BARD

## A PINDARIC ODE

## 1

*Strophe*

“Run seize thee, ruthless King!  
 Confusion on thy banners wait,  
 Though fann’d by Conquest’s crimson wing  
 They mock the air with idle state.  
 Helm, nor hauberk’s twisted mail,  
 Nor e’en thy virtues, Tyrant, shall avail  
 To save thy secret soul from nightly fears,  
 From Cambria’s curse, from Cambria’s tears!”

5

Such were the sounds, that o’er the crested pride  
 Of the first Edward scatter’d wild dismay,  
 As down the steep of Snowdon’s shaggy side  
 He wound with toilsome march his long array.  
 Stout Gloster stood aghast in speechless trance;  
 “To arms!” cried Mortimer, and couch’d his quivering  
 lance.

10

*Antistrophe*

On a rock whose haughty brow 15  
 Frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood,  
 Robed in the sable garb of woe,  
 With haggard eyes the Poet stood  
 (Loose his beard, and hoary hair  
 Streamed, like a meteor, to the troubled air) 20  
 And with a Master's hand, and Prophet's fire,  
 Struck the deep sorrows of his lyre:  
 "Hark, how each giant-oak, and desert cave,  
 Sighs to the torrent's awful voice beneath!  
 O'er thee, O King! their hundred arms they wave, 25  
 Revenge on thee in hoarser murmurs breathe;  
 Vocal no more, since Cambria's fatal day,  
 To high-born Hoel's harp, or soft Llewellyn's lay.

*Epode*

"Cold is Cadwallo's tongue,  
 That hush'd the stormy main; 30  
 Brave Urien sleeps upon his craggy bed;  
 Mountains, ye mourn in vain  
 Modred, whose magic song  
 Made huge Plinlimmon bow his cloud-topped head.  
 On dreary Arvon's shore they lie, 35  
 Smear'd with gore, and ghastly pale:  
 Far, far aloof the affrighted ravens sail;  
 The famish'd eagle screams, and passes by.  
 Dear lost companions of my tuneful art,

---

*Loose his beard, etc.* (19) — This description is like that of an old Hebrew prophet.

*Plinlimmon* (34) — the name of a Welsh mountain.

Dear, as the light that visits these sad eyes, 40  
 Dear, as the ruddy drops that warm my heart,  
 Ye died amidst your dying country's cries —

No more I weep. They do not sleep.  
 On yonder cliffs, a grisly band,  
 I see them sit, they linger yet, 45  
 Avengers of their native land:  
 With me in dreadful harmony they join,  
 And weave with bloody hands the tissue of thy line:—

## 2

*Strophe*

“ ‘Weave the warp, and weave the woof,  
 The winding sheet of Edward's race. 50  
 Give ample room, and verge enough  
 The characters of hell to trace.

Mark the year, and mark the night,  
 When Severn shall re-echo with affright  
 The shrieks of death, through Berkeley's roofs 55  
 that ring,

Shrieks of an agonizing King!  
 She-Wolf of France, with unrelenting fangs,  
 That tear'st the bowels of thy mangled Mate,  
 From thee be born, who o'er thy country hangs  
 The scourge of heaven. What terrors round him wait! 60  
 Amazement in his van, with Flight combin'd,  
 And Sorrow's faded form, and Solitude behind.

---

*grisly* (44) — horrible.

*verge* (51) — margin, space.

*Severn* (54) — A river in the eastern part of Wales.

*amazement* (61) — confusion.

*Antistrophe*

" 'Mighty victor, mighty lord!  
 Low on his funeral couch he lies!  
 No pitying heart, no eye, afford 65  
 A tear to grace his obsequies.  
 Is the sable warrior fled?  
 Thy son is gone. He rests among the dead.  
 The swarm, that in thy noontide beam were born?  
 Gone to salute the rising morn. 70  
 Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,  
 While proudly riding o'er the azure realm  
 In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes;  
 Youth on the prow, and Pleasure at the helm;  
 Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway, 75  
 That, hushed in grim repose, expects his evening prey.

*Epode*

" 'Fill high the sparkling bowl,  
 The rich repast prepare,  
 Reft of a crown, he yet may share the feast:  
 Close by the regal chair 80  
 Fell Thirst and Famine scowl  
 A baleful smile upon their baffled guest.  
 Heard ye the din of battle bray,  
 Lance to lance, and horse to horse?  
 Long years of havoc urge their destined course, 85  
 And through the kindred squadrons mow their way.  
 Ye towers of Julius, London's lasting shame,

---

*Towers of Julius* (87) — The tower of London, the oldest part of which Julius Caesar was thought to have built.



With many a foul and midnight murder fed,  
 Revere his consort's faith, his father's fame,  
 And spare the meek usurper's holy head. 90  
 Above, below, the rose of snow,  
 Twin'd with her blushing foe, we spread:  
 The bristled Boar in infant gore  
 Wallows beneath the thorny shade.  
 Now, brothers, bending o'er the accursed loom, 95  
 Stamp we our vengeance deep, and ratify his doom.

## 3

*Strophe*

“ ‘Edward, lo! to sudden fate  
 (Weave we the woof. The thread is spun).  
 Half of thy heart we consecrate.  
 (The web is wove. The work is done.)’ 100

Stay, oh stay! nor thus forlorn  
 Leave me unblest'd, unpitied, here to mourn!  
 In yon bright track, that fires the western skies,  
 They melt, they vanish from my eyes.

But oh! what solemn scenes on Snowdon's height 105  
 Descending slow their glittering skirts unroll?  
 Visions of glory, spare my aching sight,  
 Ye unborn Ages, crowd not on my soul!  
 No more our long-lost Arthur we bewail.  
 All-hail, ye genuine Kings, Britannia's Issue, hail! 110

---

*the bristled boar* (93) — Richard the Third, because a silver boar was his badge.

*Half of thy heart*, etc. (99) — See Tennyson's *Dream of Fair Women*.

*Snowdon* (105) — The chief mountain in Wales.

*Antistrophe*

"Girt with many a baron bold  
 Sublime their starry fronts they rear;  
 And gorgeous Dames, and Statesmen old  
 In bearded majesty, appear.  
 In the midst a Form divine! 115  
 Her eye proclaims her of the Briton-Line;  
 Her lion-port, her awe-commanding face,  
 Attemper'd sweet to virgin-grace.  
 What strings symphonious tremble in the air,  
 What strains of vocal transport round her play! 120  
 Hear from the grave, great Taliessin, hear;  
 They breathe a soul to animate thy clay.  
 Bright Rapture calls, and soaring, as she sings,  
 Waves in the eye of Heaven her many-colour'd wings.

*Epode*

"The verse adorn again 125  
 Fierce War, and faithful Love,  
 And Truth severe, by fairy Fiction drest.  
 In buskin'd measures move  
 Pale Grief, and pleasing Pain,  
 With Horror, tyrant of the throbbing breast. 130  
 A voice, as of the cherub-choir,  
 Gales from blooming Eden bear;  
 And distant warblings lessen on my ear,  
 That lost in long futurity expire.

---

*her lion-port* (117) — Queen Elizabeth's commanding mien.  
*Taliessin* (121) — Chief of the Welsh bards.

Fond impious man, think'st thou yon sanguine cloud 135

Rais'd by thy breath, has quench'd the orb of day?

To-morrow he repairs the golden flood,

And warms the nations with redoubled ray.

Enough for me; with joy I see

The different doom our fates assign. 140

Be thine despair, and sceptred care;

To triumph, and to die, are mine."

He spake, and headlong from the mountain's height

Deep in the roaring tide he plung'd to endless night.

— Thomas Gray.

---

The infant son of Edward I. was given the title of "Prince of Wales," which the eldest son of the remaining sovereign has borne since that time. "According to the old story," says Cheney (*A Short History of England*, page 220) "Edward promised to give to the Welsh people as a prince a native of Wales and one who could not speak a word of English. He then presented to them his infant son who had just been born at the Welsh castle of Carnarvon."



**Elegy Written in a Country  
Church-yard**





ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY  
CHURCH-YARD

Gray's *Elegy* is the most popular and the most widely read poem in the English language; and the old church-yard at Stoke Poges in Buckinghamshire is as much visited by tourists as any spot in England, except Stratford-on-Avon.

The old cemetery is still a "country church-yard." The nearest post-office is two miles away, and the rural scenes described by Gray at the middle of the 18th century still meet the eye. Still the lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea; still the plowman homeward plods his weary way; still the owl complains from his ivy-mantled tower; beneath the same yew-trees' shade the forefathers of the hamlet sleep. At Windsor Castle, three miles away, the boast of heraldry and the pomp of power still prevail, for Windsor is a favourite residence of the King; and every evening at eight o'clock the curfew bell at Windsor still tolls the knell of parting day. The only change noticeable from Gray's description is that the sheep have lost their bells—drowsy tinklings no longer lull the distant folds. Hard by the same church-yard still stands the wood where the poet was wont to walk in melancholy mood, and a short distance away at Burnham Beeches is pointed out the nodding beech that still wreathes its old fantastic roots so high, where at noontide he would stretch his listless length. It is a peaceful, dreamy landscape in one of the most beautiful parts of England. The visitor may

learn, if he is sufficiently interested to spend a day and make inquiry, that the curfew referred to was doubtless the one at Windsor, that the ivy-mantled tower is the tower of St. Giles Church in the midst of the cemetery and still covered with ivy; and he may see the English country life much as it was at the time the poem was written. In this old St. Giles church lie buried many persons of more or less renown, and tablets are there to their memory. It was the custom there, as elsewhere, to inter persons of distinction within the church and the humble folk in the church-yard. Gray himself belonged to the latter class, and he lies buried in the same grave with his mother and his aunt immediately outside of the church. All about are ancient tombstones, many of them so weather-worn and moss-covered that their inscriptions can no longer be made out.

The *Elegy* is composed of three parts. The first three stanzas describe the quiet landscape, at nightfall: the cattle are slowly crossing the field, the plowman is coming home from his work hungry and tired, the tinkling sound of the sheep-bells is heard in the distance, the evening insects are flying around, the moon is up, and in the church tower an owl is heard as the sounds of the curfew bell float over from Windsor or from Eton.

Stanzas four to twenty-three inclusive constitute the main body of the elegy. Yonder under the ancient elms and yew-trees sleep the men who used to fell the trees, plow the fields and reap the harvests. Their joys were homely and their destiny obscure, but the high and powerful need not mock — they must all at last come to the same low estate in the grave. No monument, however

high, no tribute of honor, no voice of flattery can bring them back. And perhaps some of these lowly forefathers might have been famous and powerful too if they had only had the opportunity. Some of them may have had the latent possibilities of a Hampden or a Milton or a Cromwell, but their lot forbade. And so here are their names on the humble gravestones, with texts of scripture and tributes from those who loved them. Surely these humble men are entitled to these memorials, for no one likes to leave this life without some loving word.

The remainder of the poem is about the poet himself, his daily life and moods, and concludes with the epitaph written for himself. It is interesting to notice how perfectly Gray describes himself in the last eight stanzas. It was his custom during that part of every year which he spent at Stoke Poges to take early morning walks to meet the sun upon the upland lawn, and through the wood near where his monument now stands, across the heath, and near his favorite tree. He was a youth to fortune unknown, but his fame was rising about his ears during his own life. Science and knowledge certainly smiled on his humble birth, for he was doubtless the greatest scholar in England in his day; and melancholy marked him for her own. In a letter to his friend West at Oxford he wrote: "Low spirits are my true and faithful companions; they get up with me, go to bed with me, make journeys and returns as I do . . . but most commonly we sit alone together." All of his life he was melancholy and more or less morbid. His bounty (generosity) was large, and his soul was honest, sincere, and simple. He was offered the office of poet-laureate,

and refused. He said he would "rather be a sergeant-trumpeter or pin-maker to the palace." Previously he had declined the degree of Doctor of Laws from the University of Aberdeen. In return for these traits of character he had gained his only wish — a friend (*line* 124). In this line Gray probably refers to Horace Walpole, who was his intimate associate at Eton and Cambridge, with whom he traveled on the Continent, who looked after the publication of his poems, and at whose famous "Strawberry Hill" residence Gray spent a part of every year for the last twenty-five years of his life. Other friends were Richard West, son of a Lord Chancellor of Ireland, and William Mason, who became Gray's biographer, but the tribute in the "epitaph", as previously stated, is probably to Walpole — notwithstanding the fact that at one time they had had a famous quarrel.

#### ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCH-YARD

(The text here given is that copied by Edmund Gosse from one of the earliest editions and is authoritative. It is slightly different from most modern editions.)

### 1

The Curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,

---

*Curfew* — French *couvre-feu* (*line* 1) — cover-fire. A custom introduced after the Norman Conquest for protection against fire, as most of the houses were then wood. Now all of the houses in England are brick, stone, or plaster. The ringing of the "curfew" now generally means that children of a certain age must get indoors, and off streets.



The plowman homeward plods his weary way,  
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

## 2

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,      5  
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,  
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,  
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds:

## 3

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r  
The mopeing owl does to the moon complain      10  
Of such as, wand'ring near her secret bow'r,  
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

## 4

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,  
Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,  
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,      15  
The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

## 5

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,  
The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,  
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,  
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.      20

---

*a solemn stillness holds* (6) — A solemn stillness pervades the air.

*rude* (16) — uncultured.

*straw-built shed* (18) — Many sheds and even many residences in the British Isles are still thatched or covered with straw.

*lowly bed* (20) — does not here mean the grave.

## 6

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,  
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:  
No children run to lisp their sire's return,  
Or climb his knee the envied kiss to share.

## 7

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield, 25  
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke:  
How jocund did they drive their team afield!  
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

## 8

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,  
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure; 30  
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile  
The short and simple annals of the poor.

## 9

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,  
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour. 35  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

## 10

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to These the fault,  
If Mem'ry o'er their Tomb no Trophies raise,

Where through the long-drawn isle and fretted vault  
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise. 40 .

## 11

Can storied urn or animated bust  
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?  
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,  
Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of death?

## 12

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid 45  
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;  
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,  
Or wak'd to extasy the living lyre.

## 13

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page  
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll; 50  
Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,  
And froze the genial current of the soul.

## 14

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,  
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen, 55  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

---

*fretted vault* (39) — ornamented with fretwork, or small bands crossed and interlaced. It has been pointed out that the service at King's College chapel, Cambridge, inspired this couplet.

*storied urn* (41) — a memorial urn, with inscriptions.

*animated bust* (41) — a life-like bust.

*provoke* (43) — call forth.

*living lyre* (48) — poetry.

## 15

Some village-Hampden that with dauntless breast  
 The little Tyrant of his fields withstood,  
 Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,  
 Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood. 60

## 16

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,  
 The threats of pain and ruin to despise,  
 To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,  
 And read their hist'ry in a nation's eyes,

## 17

Their lot forbad: nor circumscrib'd alone 65  
 Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd;  
 Forbad to wade through slaughter to a throne,  
 And shut the gates of mercy on mankind.

*village-Hampden* (57) — John Hampden, a famous English patriot, one of the first opponents of the tax of ship-money.

*little Tyrant* (58) — in comparison with Charles I. who was a great tyrant.

*Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood* (60) — This line is not true to history, but in Gray's time it was the belief that Cromwell had brought about the death of Charles. For example, Goldsmith says in his very popular *History of England* that Cromwell "secretly solicited and contrived the death of Charles I." We know now that this is wholly untrue.

*Th' applause of list'ning senates*, etc. (61) — as William Pitt, Lord Chatham, was then doing.

The next three lines (in stanza 16) may refer to Walpole (father of Gray's special friend, Horace Walpole), who was closing his long ministry (1721-1742) when Gray began the *Elegy*.

*shut the gates of mercy* (68) — show no mercy. — Shakespeare. (Henry V.) 111, 3, says: — "The gates of mercy shall be all shut up."

## 18

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,  
 To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame, 70  
 Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride  
 With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

## 19

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,  
 Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;  
 Along the cool sequester'd vale of life 75  
 They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

## 20

Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect  
 Some frail memorial still erected nigh,  
 With uncouth rhimes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,  
 Implores the passing tribute of a sigh. 80

## 21

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd muse,  
 The place of fame and elegy supply:  
 And many a holy text around she strews,  
 That teach the rustic moralist to die.

---

*struggling pangs of conscious* (69)—Truth is here personified and represented as struggling for birth. Their lot rendered it unnecessary for them to conceal their opinions with regard to what they knew to be truth.

*To quench*, etc. (70) — They had not learned to be shameless in wrong-doing.

*Or heap the shrine*, etc. (71) — referring to the custom in the 18th century of using fulsome flattery in the dedication of poetical or other literary works to the nobility.



## 22

For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey, 85  
 This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,  
 Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,  
 Nor cast one longing lin'gring look behind?

## 23

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,  
 Some pious drops the closing eye requires; 90  
 E'en from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,  
 E'en in our Ashes live their wonted Fires.

## 24

For thee, who mindful of th' unhonour'd Dead,  
 Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;  
 If chance, by lonely contemplation led, 95  
 Some kindred Spirit shall inquire thy Fate,—

## 25

Haply some hoary-headed Swain may say,  
 'Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn  
 Brushing with hasty steps the dews away  
 To meet the sun upon the upland lawn. 100

---

Stanzas 22 and 23 mean that no one leaves this life with entire willingness; even from the grave the voice seems to call back to the friends and scenes of life.

*pious* (90) — Here the meaning is dutiful.

*For thee* (93) — refers to the poet himself — as for thee.

Stanza 24 is involved but its meaning is, if some kindred spirit should read this poem and, passing that way, should inquire the fate of its author, perhaps some old man will say, etc.

## 26

'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech,  
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,  
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,  
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

## 27

'Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn, 105  
Mutt'ring his wayward fancies he would rove,  
Now drooping, woeful-wan, like one forlorn,  
Or craz'd with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.

## 28

'One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,  
Along the heath, and near his fav'rite tree; 110  
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,  
Nor up the lawn, not at the wood was he:

## 29

'The next, with dirges due in sad array  
Slow thro' the church-way path we saw him born.  
Approach and read (for thou cans't read) the lay, 115  
Grav'd on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.'

---

*for thou canst read* (115) — It is an old uneducated peasant that is speaking. It is as if he said: "You can read the epitaph, although I cannot."

*The Epitaph*

30

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth  
 A Youth, to Fortune and to Fame unknown.  
 Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,  
 And Melancholy mark'd him for her own. 120

31

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,  
 Heav'n did a recompence as largely send:  
 He gave to Mis'ry all he had, a tear,  
 He gain'd from Heav'n ('twas all he wish'd) a friend.

32

No farther seek his merits to disclose, 125  
 Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,  
 (There they alike in trembling hope repose,  
 The bosom of his Father and his God.

— Thomas Gray.

---

*"The Epitaph"* — written by Gray as a description of himself.

St. Giles church, standing in the midst of the churchyard, was built in 1330 on the site of a church built in 1107. It is well preserved and contains many interesting memorials.

Compare with this *Elegy* such other famous English elegies as Milton's *Lycidas*, Shelley's *Adonais*, Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, and Matthew Arnold's *Thyrsis*.

## **The Deserted Village**





## THE DESERTED VILLAGE

*The Deserted Village* is a didactic and descriptive poem; but unlike most didactic poems it is not a bore, and unlike most descriptive poems it is not unprofitable. Indeed, its descriptions are so supremely good that they were long ago given a permanent place in English literature; and its political economy is coming, at last after a century and a third, to be the watchword of great national movements in both Goldsmith's own country and the United States. Goldsmith held that the permanent strength of a nation must rest upon its small independent land-holders, that the life of such people is the happiest and freest, and that the accumulation of great landed estates, with its accompanying luxury, was a bad thing for the country. He deplored the laws and customs which made it possible for powerful lords and squires to crush out the small land-holders, convert the land into parks, hunting-grounds, and great grazing tracts, and thus make it necessary for the yeomen and peasants to flock to the cities or emigrate to America. For a hundred years or more every editor of Goldsmith spoke slightly of this theory, saying one after another, "We now know this to be faulty political economy." The fact is, we now know it to be the soundest political economy; and everywhere, both in England and America, the cry today is, "Back to the farm!" One of the greatest national questions in England today is how to correct the very evils which Goldsmith deplored one hundred and thirty-five years ago. That the evils

complained of by him were not the fiction of a poetic imagination is evident from abundant contemporary evidence. Goldsmith wrote from first-hand knowledge. In his dedication of *The Deserted Village* to Sir Joshua Reynolds he says:

"I have taken all possible pains in my country excursions, for these four or five years past, to be certain of what I allege, and all my views and inquiries have led me to believe those miseries real which I here attempt to display."

John Cowper, writing in 1732, said, "When these commons came to be enclosed and converted into pasture the Ruin of the Poor is a natural consequence; they being bought out by the lord of the Manor or some other person of substance." He said that in thirty years more than twenty villages in his vicinity were depopulated. "In some parishes 120 families of Farmers and Cottagers have in a few years been reduced to four, to two, aye, and sometimes to but one family, and if the practice of enclosing continues much longer we may expect to see all the great estates ingrossed by a few Hands, and the industrious Farmers and Cottagers almost entirely rooted out of the Kingdom." A pamphlet signed "A Country Farmer" and printed in 1786 (sixteen years after *The Deserted Village*) shows that in one part of England several hundred villages, which forty years before contained four hundred to five hundred inhabitants each, then had only forty to eighty each — "some only one poor decrepit man or woman, housed by the occupiers of the lands, who live in another parish, to prevent their being obliged to pay towards the support of the poor who live in the next parish." The writer of the pamph-

let mentions one case in which twenty farms were consolidated into four and the whole area devoted to grazing, sixty cottages being pulled down. Two villages in Leicestershire within two miles of each other, which had contained thirty-four or thirty-five dwellings each, had been reduced in one case to three houses and in the other to one house. Then he goes on to say, "Many of the small farmers who have been deprived of their livelihood have sold their stock-in-trade and have raised from £50 to £100 with which they procured themselves and their families a passage to America."

John Wedge, writing in 1793 of his own county of Warwickshire, says, "The hardy yeomanry of country villages have been driven for employment to Birmingham, Coventry, and other manufacturing towns." In the time of Cromwell there were at least 180,000 yeomen and small land-owners, but a hundred years later they were being recognized as a class of the past. During the ten years from 1762 to 1772, just when Goldsmith was writing *The Deserted Village*, it is known that more than 1,800 families, comprising about 9,000 persons, were, in consequence of "inclosures," sent adrift in four counties alone, and the process continued without interruption for many years afterwards.

It is a well-known fact that the laws and customs, particularly the latter, have made it possible for most of the land of England to come into the hands of a comparatively few people, where it still remains. Fortescue says that in the reign of Henry VI in no country of Europe were small proprietors so numerous as in England. "They are they that in times past made all

France afraid'' of England, says Harrison. Today two-thirds of the whole area of England and Wales belongs to the members of the House of Lords or other men of great wealth. The purpose of such organizations as the "English Land Restoration League" is to get these great estates divided up and placed once more in the hands of the people.

The Enclosure Act, which brought about the results deplored by Goldsmith, gave the lord of the manor a right to enclose the common land, and at the time of Goldsmith this act was being enforced to its fullest extent. Between 1760 and 1774 as many as 700 private Enclosure Acts were passed and at least 3,000,000 acres of common land were thereby enclosed. The little land holders were too poor to pay for the fencing and for the expenses of the private act under which the enclosure was made and the inevitable result followed. Mr. G. G. Whiskard, of Wadham College, Oxford, says:

"The inevitable result followed. Almost immediately after each enclosure the small proprietors sold their allotments at a sacrifice to the lord of the manor and all, or nearly all, the village land fell into the hands of a single wealthy proprietor. Even where the small proprietor was able to pay his share of expenses and do his own fencing, yet other expenses fell on him. He had no one to represent his interests in Parliament, and in many of the private Acts it is expressly provided that the lord of the manor, to whom fell the greater share of the old common land, should be exempt from paying any expenses, and should have his fencing done for him at the joint cost of the other proprietors, among whom too the whole of the expenses were divided.

"In short the enclosures took the common land of England from the poor and gave it to the rich. It is true that one result of this exchange was that the land was more profitably cultivated; but this good was outweighed by many evils. The small farmer had perforce become a laborer, and the laborer, who had formerly been able to get through the bad days of winter with the help of the



cow which he pastured on the common land, could now do so no longer, for his pasture was taken from him. The result was widespread distress and wholesale emigration. The laborer who emigrated was not missed; his place was taken by machinery. It is not altogether true, as Macaulay would have us believe, that the dark side of Goldsmith's picture is drawn entirely from Ireland. Many villages of England were depleted of their inhabitants, while the status of the few that were left had changed from the status of employer to that of laborer. A whole class—that of the small farmer—had almost perished out of England, and its loss is felt to this day."

"Under the Tudors," says Mr. Lloyd Sanders, of Christ Church College, "the practice of enclosures together with the still more oppressive plan of converting arable land into pasture-land, became a crying evil. . . . Bishop Latimer, in his famous *Sermon on the Plough*, preached before the court of Edward VI, denounced the nobles as 'enclosers, graziers, and rent-raisers'. One or two attempts were made to check these practices. Henry VIII ordered the houses which had been pulled down to be rebuilt, and limited the number of sheep on each farm to 2,000; and the Protector Somerset appointed a Royal Commission 'for the redress of enclosure'. Such efforts, however, were of no avail, and complaints were frequent through the reigns of Elizabeth and the Stuarts. Later it came to be thought necessary to obtain the sanction of Parliament for enclosure. The first Local Enclosure Act was passed under Anne, and since then the permission of the legislature has generally been regarded as a necessary preliminary to enclosure. Between the years 1700 and 1845 some 4,000 of these Acts were passed, and 7,175,000 acres of land consolidated, whereby the class of small yeoman became almost extinct."

Some slight knowledge at least of the conditions here briefly discussed is necessary to an understanding of even the motive of *The Deserted Village*. Indeed one of the great elements of value in the poem is its contribution to our knowledge of the social life of England in the last half of the 18th century; for it should be remembered that the "Auburn" of the poem is an English village, the life described is English life, and the conditions English conditions, although the actual "Auburn" has been identified with the village of Lissoy or Lishoy,



Goldsmith's boyhood home in the county of Westmeath, Ireland. "Lissoy," says Howett, "consists in fact of a few common cottages by the road-side, in a flat and by no means particularly interesting scene. A few hundred yards beyond these cottages stand, at some distance from the road, the ruins of the house where Goldsmith's father lived. In the front view of the house is the 'decent church' of Kilkenny West, that literally 'tops the neighboring hill'; and in a circuit of not more than half a mile diameter around the house are 'the never-failing brook', 'the busy mill', 'the hawthorn bush with seats beneath the shade', in short every striking object of the picture. There are, besides, many ruined houses in the neighborhood, bespeaking a better state of population than at present."

Goldsmith evidently took his childhood home as it existed in his loving recollection, and gave it an English setting.

But after all, the supremacy of *The Deserted Village* lies not in its political economy or its value as a historical document, but in its descriptions of village life and in its characters of the village preacher and the village schoolmaster. If it had not been for these the poem would have been forgotten long ago, but there are hardly any lines in all English literature more familiar than those just referred to; and outside of Shakespeare and Pope there are no lines more often quoted. Moreover, the closing lines of the description of the village preacher contain one of the finest similes to be found in the whole range of English poetry.

## FROM THE DESERTED VILLAGE

Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain,  
Where health and plenty cheered the labouring swain,  
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,  
And parting summer's lingering blooms delay'd: 5  
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,  
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,  
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,  
Where humble happiness endeared each scene!  
How often have I paused on every charm, 10  
The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,  
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,  
The decent church that topt the neighbouring hill,  
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,  
For talking age and whispering lovers made!  
How often have I blessed the coming day, 15  
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,  
And all the village train, from labour free,  
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree;  
While many a pastime circled in the shade,  
The young contending as the old survey'd; 20  
And many a gambol frolicked o'er the ground,  
And sleights of art and feats of strength went round;  
And still as each repeated pleasure tired,  
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspir'd;  
The dancing pair that simply sought renown, 25  
By holding out to tire each other down;  
The swain, mistrustless of his smutted face,

---

*mistrustless* (line 27) — unconscious.

While secret laughter tittered round the place;  
 The bashful virgin's sidelong looks of love,  
 The matron's glance that would those looks reprove. 30  
 These were thy charms, sweet village! sports like these,  
 With sweet succession, taught e'en toil to please;  
 These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed,  
 These were thy charms — but all these charms are fled.

Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn, 35  
 Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;  
 Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,  
 And desolation saddens all thy green:  
 One only master grasps the whole domain,  
 And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain; 40  
 No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,  
 But, choked with sedges, works its weedy way;  
 Along thy glades, a solitary guest,  
 The hollow sounding bittern guards its nest;  
 Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies, 45  
 And tires their echoes with unvaried cries;  
 Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,  
 And the long grass o'ertops the mouldering wall;  
 And trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand,  
 Far, far away thy children leave the land. 50

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
 Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:

---

*hollow sounding bittern* (44) — the bittern is a wading bird which makes a hollow booming noise.

*men decay* (52) — decrease in number. It does not here mean that men decay in character, although this is the meaning universally attached to it when it is quoted by public speakers and writers.

Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;  
A breath can make them, as a breath has made:  
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride, 55  
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

A time there was, ere England's griefs began,  
When every rood of ground maintained its man;  
For him light labour spread her wholesome store,  
Just gave what life required, but gave no more: 60  
His best companions, innocence and health,  
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.

But times are altered; trade's unfeeling train  
Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain:  
Along the lawn where scattered hamlets rose 65  
Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose;  
And every want to opulence allied,  
And every pang that folly pays to pride.  
Those gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,  
Those calm desires that asked but little room, 70  
Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene,  
Lived in each look, and brightened all the green;  
These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,  
And rural mirth and manners are no more.

\* \* \* \* \*

Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled, 75  
And still where many a garden flower grows wild;  
There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,

---

*A breath can make them* (54) — Princes and lords are created by the word of the King.

*peasantry* (55) — here means small land-holders.

The village preacher's modest mansion rose.  
 A man he was to all the country dear,  
 And passing rich with forty pounds a year; 80  
 Remote from towns he ran his godly race,  
 Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change his place;  
 Unpractised he to fawn, or seek for power,  
 By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;  
 Far other aims his heart had learned to prize 85  
 More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.  
 His house was known to all the vagrant train,  
 He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain;  
 The long-remembered beggar was his guest,  
 Whose beard descending swept his aged breast; 90  
 The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,  
 Claimed kindred there, and had his claims allow'd;  
 The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,  
 Sat by his fire, and talked the night away;  
 Wept o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow done, 95  
 Shouldered his crutch, and showed how fields were won.  
 Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to glow,  
 And quite forgot their vices in their woe;  
 Careless their merits or their faults to scan,  
 His pity gave ere charity began. 100

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,  
 And e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side;  
 But in his duty prompt at every call,  
 He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all;

---

*passing rich* (80) — more than rich. The poet's father and brother were both country parsons and each received £40 a year. The description here is thought to be of his father.



And, as a bird each fond endearment tries 105  
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,  
He tried each art, reprov'd each dull delay,  
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.

Beside the bed where parting life was laid,  
And sorrow, guilt, and pain by turns dismayed, 110  
The reverend champion stood. At his control,  
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;  
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,  
And his last faltering accents whispered praise.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace, 115  
His looks adorned the venerable place;  
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,  
And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray.  
The service past, around the pious man,  
With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran; 120  
E'en children followed with endearing wile,  
And plucked his gown, to share the good man's smile.  
His ready smile a parent's warmth expressed,  
Their welfare pleased him, and their cares distressed;  
To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given, 125  
But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.  
As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,  
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,  
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,  
Eternal sunshine settles on its head. 130

Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,  
With blossomed furze unprofitably gay,

There, in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule,  
 The village master taught his little school:  
 A man severe he was, and stern to view, 135  
 I knew him well, and every truant knew;  
 Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace  
 The day's disasters in his morning face;  
 Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee  
 At all his jokes, for many a joke had he; 140  
 Full well the busy whisper, circling round,  
 Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned:  
 Yet he was kind, or if severe in aught,  
 The love he bore to learning was in fault.  
 The village all declared how much he knew; 145  
 'Twas certain he could write, and cipher, too;  
 Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,  
 And e'en the story ran that he could gauge.  
 In arguing, too, the parson owned his skill,  
 And e'en though vanquished, he could argue still; 150  
 While words of learned length and thund'ring sound  
 Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around,  
 And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew  
 That one small head could carry all he knew.  
 But past is all his fame. The very spot 155  
 Where many a time he triumphed, is forgot.

\* \* \* \* \*

O luxury! thou curst by Heaven's decree,  
 How ill exchanged are things like these for thee!  
 How do thy potions, with insidious joy,  
 Diffuse their pleasure only to destroy! 160

---

*the village master* (134) — The original of this happy sketch was doubtless Thomas Byrne, Goldsmith's teacher at Lissoy.

Kingdoms, by thee, to sickly greatness grown,  
 Boast of a florid vigour not their own:  
 At every draught more large and large they grow,  
 A bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe;  
 Till, sapped their strength, and every part unsound, 165  
 Down, down they sink, and spread a ruin round.

E'en now the devastation is begun,  
 And half the business of destruction done;  
 E'en now, methinks, as pondering here I stand,  
 I see the rural virtues leave the land. 170  
 Down where yon anchoring vessel spreads the sail  
 That idly waiting flaps with every gale,  
 Downward they move, a melancholy band,  
 Pass from the shore, and darken all the strand.  
 Contented toil, and hospitable care, 175  
 And kind connubial tenderness are there,  
 And piety with wishes placed above,  
 And steady loyalty, and faithful love.

\* \* \* \* \*

— Oliver Goldsmith.

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Read Moore's *Utopia* in connection with *The Deserted Village*.  
 Compare Chaucer's Parish Priest, in the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, with Goldsmith's *Village Preacher*.

Note: A good example of land held in common may still be seen in the suburbs of Oxford where a considerable tract of land has been pastured in common by the "freemen" of Oxford since the days of the Norman conquest.



**To Mary**





## TO MARY

Cowper's poem *To Mary* is one of the most familiar in the language — one of the most familiar and one of the most pathetic. The lines are so clear and so simple that they do not need any "explaining," and yet the poem has a story back of it which it is needful to know if one is to understand and appreciate it.

William Cowper (1731-1800) came of the nobility. His mother was descended from Henry III, and his great uncle was Lord Chancellor for both Queen Anne and George I. From nature he received more than a touch of melancholy insanity as well as the gift of genius — an insanity which put him twice into the mad-house and made him thrice attempt suicide. An early love affair with a beautiful cousin was frowned upon by her father, and the poet never married. His nature was deeply religious and he became the great poet of the religious revival in England which we associate with the names of Wesley and Whitefield. He wrote many of the great hymns now sung in all the churches. His education was good, but his means were very slender, and he was so shy and sensitive and unworldly that he was wholly unfitted to make his way in this world. He says of himself, with heartbreaking pathos—

I was a stricken deer that left the herd  
Long since.

When he was somewhat past thirty years of age he became a member of the household of Rev. Morley

Unwin, and all of the rest of his life is linked in a remarkable way with that family. Mr. Unwin died two years after Cowper took up his residence with them, and thereafter Mrs. Unwin and Cowper resided together in a purity of relationship as unquestioned as their love for each other was deep. When she was forty-eight and Cowper forty-one they planned to be married, but Cowper's melancholy and despondency began to increase and the marriage never took place. Goldwin Smith says of this remarkable friendship:

"They became companions for life. Cowper says they were as mother and son to each other; but Mrs. Unwin was only seven years older than he. To label their connection is impossible, and to try to do it would be a platitude. In his poems Cowper calls Mrs. Unwin Mary; she seems always to have called him Mr. Cowper. It is evident that her son, a strictly virtuous and religious man, never had the slightest misgiving about his mother's position."

In her advancing years Mrs. Unwin had a slight stroke of paralysis and her mind was affected. The worse she became the brighter beamed Cowper's affection for her. In 1793, while she was in this pitiable state, he wrote the poem *To Mary*. Mrs. Unwin died three years later, aged seventy-two. When Cowper looked upon her corpse he flung himself across the room with a passionate cry of grief, and from that time he never mentioned her name or spoke of her again. In order that Cowper should know nothing about the burial it was performed at night by torch-light. He survived her three years and a half, with now and then a gleam of reason and a faint revival of his great faculties.

## TO MARY

The twentieth year is well-nigh past,  
Since first our sky was overcast;  
Ah, would that this might be the last!  
My Mary!

Thy spirits have a fainter flow,  
I see thee daily weaker grow,  
'Twas my distress that brought thee low,  
My Mary!

Thy needles, once a shining store,  
For my sake restless heretofore,  
Now rust disused, and shine no more,  
My Mary!

For though thou gladly wouldst fulfil  
The same kind office for me still,  
Thy sight now seconds not thy will,  
My Mary!

But well thou playedst the housewife's part,  
And all thy threads with magic art  
Have wound themselves about my heart,  
My Mary!

Thy indistinct expressions seem  
Like language uttered in a dream;  
Yet me they charm, what'er the theme,  
My Mary!

Thy silver locks, once auburn bright,  
Are still more lovely in my sight  
Than golden beams of orient light,  
My Mary!

For, could I view nor them nor thee,  
What sight worth seeing could I see?  
The sun would rise in vain for me,  
My Mary!

Partakers of thy sad decline,  
Thy hands their little force resign,  
Yet, gently prest, press gently mine,  
My Mary!

Such feebleness of limbs thou provest,  
That now at every step thou movest  
Upheld by two, yet still thou lovest,  
My Mary!

And still to love, though prest with ill,  
In wintry age to feel no chill,  
With me is to be lovely still,  
My Mary!

But ah! by constant heed I know,  
How oft the sadness that I show  
Transforms thy smiles to looks of woe,  
My Mary!



And should my future lot be cast  
With much resemblance of the past,  
Thy worn-out heart will break at last,  
My Mary!

— William Cowper.

---

Note: The first line of the poem refers to an attack of insanity which Cowper had twenty years before—the first attack after he went to live with the Unwins.

Tennyson could never trust himself to read this poem aloud. It is indeed “full of tears.”



## Highland Mary



## HIGHLAND MARY

In the imposing monument to Robert Burns at Alloway, near Ayr, in Scotland, there may be seen two small volumes, one of the Old Testament and one of the New. On them are written the names "Robert Burns" and "Mary Campbell." They are also inscribed by the hand of the poet with these two texts: "Ye shall not swear by my name falsely; I am the Lord;" and "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths."

These two volumes with this interesting inscription were given by Burns to Mary Campbell one Sunday in the month of May, 1786, on the Banks of the Ayr, and Mary gave him a Bible in return. Standing on each side of a brook, and holding a Bible between them, they pledged themselves to each other while life should last. They expected to marry and go to the West Indies, but they never saw each other after that day. Mary, whose home was on the Clyde, and who had been working in Burns's neighborhood as a children's maid, left at once for her home to arrange affairs for their proposed "change of life," as Burns says in a letter. In the autumn "she was returning to Glasgow, where she had obtained a place, when, stopping on the road at Greenock to attend a sick brother, she caught fever from him and died. She was buried in the west kirkyard of the town, a spot where all who love the Scottish muse never fail to drop their fervent tear." (John Stuart Blackie.)



A monument, erected by descendants of her family, now marks her grave.

On the third anniversary of her death Burns wrote *To Mary in Heaven*, the last three stanzas of which describe the betrothal incident:

That sacred hour can I forget,  
Can I forget the hallowed grove,  
Where, by the winding Ayr, we met,  
To live one day of parting love!  
Eternity can not efface  
Those records dear of transports past,  
Thy image at our last embrace,  
Ah! little thought we 'twas our last!

Ayr, gurgling, kissed his pebbled shore,  
O'erhung with wild-woods, thickening green;  
The fragrant birch and hawthorne hoar,  
Twined amorous round the raptur'd scene:  
The flowers sprang wanton to be prest,  
The birds sang love on every spray;  
Till too, too soon the glowing west  
Proclaimed the speed of winged day.

Still o'er these scenes my mem'ry wakes,  
And fondly broods with miser-care;  
Time but th' impression stronger makes,  
As streams their channels deeper wear.  
My Mary! dear departed shade!  
Where is thy place of blissful rest?  
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?  
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

Mary Campbell was but one of the many flames of the warm-hearted Bobbie, but she was doubtless the object of his deepest and sincerest affection. She was the subject of some of his finest poems, including *To Mary in Heaven*, *My Highland Lassie*, *Sweet Afton*, and *Highland Mary*.

## HIGHLAND MARY

Ye banks and braes and streams around  
The castle o' Montgomery,  
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,  
Your waters never drumlie!  
There simmer first unfauld her robes,  
And there the langest tarry;  
For there I took the last fareweel  
O' my sweet Highland Mary.

How sweetly bloom'd the gay green birk,  
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,  
As underneath their fragrant shade  
I clasp'd her to my bosom!  
The golden hours on angel wings  
Flew o'er me and my dearie;  
For dear to me as light and life  
Was my sweet Highland Mary.

Wi' mony a vow and lock'd embrace  
Our parting was fu' tender;  
And pledging aft to meet again,  
We tore oursels asunder;  
But, O! fell Death's untimely frost,  
That nipt my flower sae early!  
Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay,  
That wraps my Highland Mary!

O pale, pale now, those ruby lips,  
I aft hae kiss'd sae fondly!  
And closed for aye the sparkling glance

That dwelt on me sae kindly;  
And moldering now in silent dust  
That heart that lo'ed me dearly!  
But still within my bosom's core  
Shall live my Highland Mary.

— Robert Burns.

**Lines Composed a Few Miles  
Above Tintern Abbey**





# LINES COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY

*Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey* (generally referred to as the "Tintern Abbey" poem) may be called the spiritual autobiography of William Wordsworth. It gives in one hundred and sixty lines the essence of all that any biographer has been able to tell of his eighty years. To understand it fully much of Wordsworth's other poetry, particularly the *Prelude*, should be read, as well as some account of his life; for *Tintern Abbey*, though radiant as well as profound, is an unknown language to the casual reader. One must be an ardent and devoted lover of both nature and humanity, and he must have something of that poetic insight which perceives "the light that never was, on sea or land," else he cannot interpret it and make it his own. Wordsworth spent nearly all of his long life among the dalesmen of northern England, brooding with his powerful mind over the relations of nature and the spirit of man, and the profoundest problems of life. The French Revolution stirred his sympathies deeply, and he spent a short time as a young man in Paris, but the horrors of that terrible outburst, and particularly the Napoleonic days that followed, made him lose faith for the time being in humanity and in his own ideals. He returned to England in a most unhappy state of mind, and led, as he says, a homeless life, utterly dejected. In the summer of 1793, the next year after his return from France, he made his first visit to the valley of the Wye

in Monmouthshire, alone and on foot. The five years intervening between this and his second visit were spent chiefly in "plain living and high thinking" among the quiet hills, with his sister Dorothy as his inseparable companion and with the stimulating friendship of Coleridge; though he was sometimes "'mid the din of towns and cities." The benignant influence of his sister, of nature, and of Coleridge restored Wordsworth's spirit and wrought in him the changes which he describes in the "Tintern Abbey" poem. Nature was as a medicine to his soul; and as for his sister's influence, he again and again declares that she it was that kept him a poet through those distressful years. In June, 1798, Wordsworth and Dorothy made that famous second visit to the Wye and to Tintern Abbey, mentioned in his immortal verse. In his *Memoirs* he says:

"We left Alfoxden on Monday morning the 26th of June (1798), stayed with Coleridge till Monday following, then set forth on foot towards Bristol. We were at Cottle's for a week, and thence we went toward the banks of the Wye. We crossed the Severn Ferry and walked ten miles further to Tintern Abbey, a very beautiful ruin on the Wye. The next morning we walked along the river through Monmouth to Goodrich Castle, there slept, and returned the next day to Tintern, thence to Chepstow, and from Chepstow back again in a boat to Tintern, where we slept, and thence back in a small vessel to Bristol.

"The Wye is a stately and majestic river from its width and depth, but never slow and sluggish; you can always hear its murmur. It travels through a woody country, now varied with cottages and green meadows, and now with huge and fantastic rocks."

The Wye is "stately and majestic" only in comparison with other English streams; it is a small stream compared with American and Continental rivers. The Wye country, however, is of surpassing beauty. Hill and vale and stream unite to make a picture worthy of all the

praise that poets and painters have showered upon it. In the midst of this charming setting is Tintern Abbey, built for the Cistercian monks early in the 12th century, and now in picturesque but stately ruins. A view of the Abbey by moonlight, with the river at its base and the hills towering all about it, is an experience not to be forgotten. These haunts of ancient peace are transformed by the moon and the night into faery lands forlorn.

Near Goodrich Castle is where Wordsworth met the "little cottage girl" of his *We Are Seven* poem, which is familiar to all school children.

Concerning the manner of the composition of the *Tintern Abbey* poem, Wordsworth says:

"No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of four or five days with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol. It was published almost immediately after in the little volume, *Lyrical Ballads*, of which so much has been said in these notes."

Was there ever before or since such high converse? Was there ever such an improvisation? Did any other traveller ever speak such radiant words in such noble form as he trudged across the hills? I know of nothing more interesting or amazing in the history of poetry than this unaltered impromptu of Wordsworth's, spoken to his sister as the two strolled together in the valley of the Severn and the Wye. "Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it was written down" until three or four days later. The real significance of all this lies

in the fact that it was possible only because it was the expression of the chief mood and meaning of his whole life, the blossoming of accumulated and long-maturing meditation, and mental suffering, and deep joy of restoration. It was perhaps his greatest utterance as a poetic teacher and interpreter of nature and of human life.

The dominant conception of the poem is the relation of nature to man, and the relation of the spirit of the universe to both. In the first twenty-two lines there is a description of the scenery true to its present aspect of winding and untrimmed hedgerows, orchard-tufts, plots of cottage-ground, and the river with its soft inland murmur.

Lines 23 to 50 tell how the remembrance of these beautiful scenes has been constantly with him, producing sensations sweet, felt in the blood and felt along the heart. The pleasure thus given had had no slight influence on the acts of daily life, his little nameless unremembered acts of kindness and of love. To these recollections he owed also a higher and more blessed mood — a mood in which he became so completely in harmony with nature, and so lost himself, that he was more of a spirit than a corporeal being, and was able to see into the life of things.

The next fifteen lines (50 to 65) contain another tribute, in more general terms, to the healing power of nature as represented in the sylvan Wye, tell how his spirit had turned to it from the fretful stir and fever of the world, and express the realization (*lines 63-65*) that his mind is gathering, on this second visit, life and food for future years, just as it had done on his first



visit. It was one of the most marked characteristics of Wordsworth's genius that he treasured up his pleasant experiences and emotions, let them mellow and ripen in his mind, and turned them into poetry years afterward. His poetry is full of such instances; and in the lines on *The Daffodils* he says:

For oft when on my couch I lie,  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude,  
And then my heart with pleasure fills  
And dances with the daffodils.

The next forty-five lines (65-110) contain the heart of the poem — the revelation of the four stages of his development in his attitude towards nature, and man, and the spirit of the universe — the four periods which Edward Dowden calls the period of the blood, the period of the senses, the period of the imagination, and the period of the soul.

The first stage is merely referred to in lines 73-74 — the stage of his boyish days when he took such delight in nature as any healthy young animal might take.

The second stage (*lines 76-83 especially*) was that in which nature was an appetite, a feeling and a love in itself, without any association with man and without any coloring supplied by man. This second stage, this passion for nature as nature, lasted until, as Walter Raleigh puts it, the fever of political thought and passion drove it out. Then came his saddening experiences with the seething humanity of the French Revolution.

When this crisis was past, the love of nature returned to him, but this time associated with a love of man and



with a deep sense of the pathos of things. This third stage is described in lines 88-93.

But another and a still deeper change has occurred (*lines* 93-102); he has learned to see and to feel the spirit of God in all created things, in the light of setting suns and the round ocean and the living air as well as in the mind of man. This "something" which he here calls a "motion and a spirit" he calls "an active Principle," "the Soul of all the worlds," and "the sentiment of Being," in other passages. It is a pantheistic conception of Deity: God in everything, and the spirit of everything everywhere. In many other poems of his the same idea is expressed, and it was a part of his life as well as his creed; but he held it not inconsistent with the Christian idea of Deity.

From line 110 on the poem is addressed to his sister, in whose unmixed love of nature he recognizes himself as he was in his second stage. He tells her to let nature have its way with her, to give herself up to its ministries and its rewards; and then when these ecstasies shall be matured into a sober pleasure, when her mind shall be a mansion for all lovely forms and her memory a dwelling-place for all sweet sounds and harmonies, she will not forget these, his exhortations, and this, his heart-spoken poem, across the hills of Wye — for nature never did betray the heart that loved her.

Miss Wordsworth was in complete sympathy with her brother in letting the moon shine on her in her solitary walks and in letting the misty mountain winds be free to blow against her. The following extract from her *Journal* illustrates not only her love of nature, but her

devotion to her brother; it is dated at Grasmere, November 14, 1800:

"A fine mild night. I walked with William over the Raise. It was starlight. I parted with him very sad, unwilling not to go on. The hills, and the stars, and the white waters, with their ever-varying yet ceaseless sound, were very impressive."

Sadly enough, her passion for nature led her into mountain rambles which were beyond her strength, and in 1832 she had a serious illness which left her mind clouded for the remainder of her life.

### ANALYSIS

- I. Introduction, *lines* 1-22.
- II. Although absent, these scenes have not been forgotten by the poet (22-57).
  1. They have been with him in solitude (25).
  2. And amid the noise of cities (26).
  3. He has felt them in his emotion (28).
  4. And in his intellect (29).
  5. And they have given him, also, unremembered pleasure (31).
    - (1) They have influenced him like a forgotten kind act (31-35).
    - (2) And their recollection has lifted him into the imaginative mood in which his own being was forgotten (35-49) (The "period of the imagination").
  6. Both at night and in joyless daylight his spirit has returned to these scenes (50-57).
- III. His return calls up old thoughts and new (57).
  1. This present experience will furnish food for reflection in future years.
  2. On his first visit nature was to him an appetite (66-83) (The "period of the senses").
  3. The animal pleasure in nature having before that passed away (73-74) (The "period of the blood").
  4. He has since learned to look upon nature with a feeling chastened by humanity and with the sense of a spiritual Presence (85-103) (The "period of the soul").

5. And so he is still nonetheless a lover of nature though his feelings have changed (103-111).

IV. Tribute to his sister Dorothy (111-159).

1. Her joy in nature is such as his was formerly (116-119).
2. He prays that she may continue in that joy (119-121).
3. For nature can make us feel that everything is full of blessings (121-134).
4. Her wild joy in nature will by and by become a sober pleasure like his (134-145).
5. Then she will remember his exhortation, their visit together here, and that he worshiped nature with a holier love than in his youth, both for its sake and for hers.

## **Lines**





LINES

Composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, on revisiting the banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798.

Five years have past; five summers, with the length  
 Of five long winters! and again I hear  
 These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs  
 With a soft inland murmur. Once again  
 Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,  
 That on a wild secluded scene impress  
 Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect  
 The landscape with the quiet of the sky.  
 The day is come when I again repose  
 Here, under this dark sycamore, and view 10  
 These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,  
 Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,  
 Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves  
 'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see  
 These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines 15  
 Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,  
 Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke  
 Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!

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*inland murmur* (line 4) — where the Wye joins the Severn a few miles below Tintern it rushes over a rocky channel, but here it is quiet and calm. Tennyson in *In Memoriam* says:—

There twice a day the Severn fills;  
 The salt sea-water passes by,  
 And hushes half the babbling Wye,  
 And makes a silence in the hills.

Wordsworth himself in a note calls attention to the fact that a few miles above Tintern the Wye is not affected by the tides.

*connect the landscape with the sky* (8) — a gradation of colors from the landscape to the sky.

With some uncertain notice, as might seem  
 Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods, 20  
 Or of some hermit's cave, where by his fire  
 The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms,  
 Through a long absence, have not been to me  
 As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:  
 But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din 25  
 Of towns and cities, I have owed to them  
 In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
 Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
 And passing even into my purer mind,  
 With tranquil restoration: — feelings, too, 30  
 Of unremembered pleasure; such, perhaps,  
 As have no slight or trivial influence  
 On that best portion of a good man's life,  
 His little, nameless, unremembered, acts  
 Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust, 35  
 To them I may have owed another gift,  
 Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,  
 In which the burthen of the mystery,  
 In which the heavy and the weary weight  
 Of all this unintelligible world, 40  
 Is lightened: — that serene and blessed mood,  
 In which the affections gently lead us on, —  
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
 And even the motion of our human blood

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*purer mind* (29) — clearer; furnishing not only food for sensation and feeling but for quiet thought and contemplation.

*feelings, too, etc.* (30-35) — such influences affect one's little acts of daily life.

Almost suspended, we are laid asleep 45  
 In body, and become a living soul:  
 While with an eye made quiet by the power  
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
 We see into the life of things.

If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft — 50  
 In darkness and amid the many shapes  
 Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir  
 Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,  
 Have hung upon the beatings of my heart —  
 How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee, 55  
 O sylvan Wye! thou wandered thro' the woods,  
 How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,  
 With many recognitions dim and faint,  
 And somewhat of a sad perplexity, 60  
 The picture of the mind revives again:  
 While here I stand, not only with the sense  
 Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts  
 That in this moment there is life and food  
 For future years. And so I dare to hope, 65  
 Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first

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*we are laid asleep in body . . . see into the life of things* (45-49) — In various other poems, notably the *Prelude* and the *Excursion*, he speaks of this power of the spirit of man to become one with, to fuse itself with, the spirit of nature. "Freed from the bonds of sense, the soul rises to communion with the spirit that works harmoniously in nature, and with clear vision and intense joy beholds the inner life of things." It is worth pointing out that in the "inner life of things" Wordsworth saw always joy and love — a joy chastened and subdued, but always joy and love.

I came among these hills; when like a roe  
 I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides  
 Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,  
 Wherever nature led: more like a man 70  
 Flying from something that he dreads, than one  
 Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then  
 (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,  
 And their glad animal movements all gone by)  
 To me was all in all. — I cannot paint 75  
 What then I was. The sounding cataract  
 Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,  
 The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
 Their colours and their forms, were then to me  
 An appetite; a feeling and a love, 80  
 That had no need of a remoter charm,  
 By thought supplied, nor any interest  
 Unborrowed from the eye. — That time is past,  
 And all its aching joys are now no more,  
 And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this 85  
 Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts  
 Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,  
 Abundant recompense. For I have learned  
 To look on nature, not as in the hour  
 Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes 90  
 The still, sad music of humanity,  
 Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power

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*sad music of humanity* (91) — In the *Ode on Immortality* he says:—  
 The clouds that gather round the setting sun  
 Do take a sober coloring from an eye  
 That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality.

To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime 95  
 Of something far more deeply interfused,  
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
 And the round ocean and the living air,  
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;  
 A motion and a spirit, that impels 100  
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
 And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still  
 A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
 And mountains; and of all that we behold  
 From this green earth; of all the mighty world 105  
 Of eye, and ear — both what they half create,  
 And what perceive; well pleased to recognise  
 In nature and the language of the sense,  
 The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
 The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul 110  
 Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,  
 If I were not thus taught, should I the more  
 Suffer my genial spirit to decay:  
 For thou art with me here upon the banks

---

*what they half create* (106) — what is lent to natural objects by the imagination of the beholder, —

The light that never was, on sea or land,  
 The consecration and the poet's dream.



Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend, 115  
 My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch  
 The language of my former heart, and read  
 My former pleasures in the shooting lights  
 Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while  
 May I behold in thee what I was once, 120  
 My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make  
 Knowing that Nature never did betray  
 The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,  
 Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
 From joy to joy: for she can so inform 125  
 The mind that is within us, so impress  
 With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
 With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,  
 Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,  
 Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all 130  
 The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
 Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb  
 Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold  
 Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon

---

*my dearest Friend* (115) — His sister Dorothy. Concerning her influence in restoring him to a happier state of mind, he says in the *Prelude*:

Then it was —

Thanks to the bounteous Giver of all good —  
 That the beloved Sister in whose sight  
 Those days were passed, now speaking in a voice  
 Of sudden admonition — like a brook  
 That did but cross a lonely road, and now  
 Is seen, heard, felt, and caught at every turn,  
 Companion never lost through many a league —  
 Maintained for me a saving intercourse.  
 She in the midst of all, preserved me still  
 A Poet.

Shine on thee in thy solitary walk ; 135  
 And let the misty mountain-winds be free  
 To blow against thee: and, in after years,  
 When these wild ecstasies shall be matured  
 Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind  
 Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms, 140  
 Thy memory be as a dwelling-place  
 For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then  
 If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,  
 Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts  
 Of tender joy wilt thou remember me, 145  
 And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance —  
 If I should be where I no more can hear  
 Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams  
 Of past existence — wilt thou then forget  
 That on the banks of this delightful stream 150  
 We stood together: and that I, so long  
 A worshipper of Nature, hither came  
 Unwearied in that service: rather say  
 With warmer love — oh! with far deeper zeal  
 Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget, 155  
 That after many wanderings, many years  
 Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,  
 And this green pastoral landscape, were to me  
 More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

— William Wordsworth.

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Wordsworth's great *Ode on Immortality* should be read carefully in connection with the study of the "Tintern Abbey" poem.



**Ode on Intimations of Immortality  
from Recollections of Early  
Childhood**



ODE ON INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM  
RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Principal Shairp says that Wordsworth's *Ode* "marks the highest limit which the tide of poetic inspiration has reached in England" since the days of Milton; Lord Houghton (R. M. Milnes) called it "the greatest poem in the English language," and Emerson said "*The Ode on Immortality* is the high-water mark which the intellect has reached in this age."

Wordsworth contributes materially to the interpretation of the poem in his own prose account of his childhood feelings and experiences. He says:

"This was composed during my residence at Town-End, Grasmere. Two years at least passed between the writing of the first four stanzas and the remaining part. To the attentive and competent reader the whole sufficiently explains itself, but there may be no harm in adverting here to particular feelings or experiences of my own mind on which the structure of the poem partly rests. Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being. I have said elsewhere:

'A simple child  
That lightly draws its breath,  
And feels its life in every limb,  
What should it know of death?'

"But it was not so much from the source of animal vivacity that my difficulty came, as from a sense of the indomitableness of the spirit within me. I used to brood over the stories of Enoch and Elijah, and almost persuade myself that, whatever might become of others, I should be translated in something of the same way to heaven. With a feeling congenial to this, I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while



going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality. At that time I was afraid of mere processes. In later periods of life I have deplored, as we have all reason to do, a subjugation of an opposite character, and have rejoiced over the remembrances, as is expressed in the lines *Obstinate Questionings*, etc. To that dream-like vividness and splendour, which invests objects of sight in childhood, every one, I believe, if he would look back, could bear testimony, and I need not dwell upon it here; but having in the poem regarded it as a presumptive evidence of a prior state of existence, I think it right to protest against a conclusion, which has given pain to some good and pious persons, that I meant to inculcate such a belief. It is far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith as more than an element in our instincts of immortality."

John Ruskin, in discussing the relation of nature to art, says (*Modern Painters*, part 3, Chapter 5):

"I suppose there are few, among those who love nature otherwise than by profession and at second-hand, who look not back to their youngest and least-learned days as those of the most intense, superstitious, insatiable, and beatific perception of her splendours. And the bitter decline of this glorious feeling, though many note it not, partly owing to the cares and weight of manhood, which leave them not the time nor the liberty to look for their lost treasure, and partly to the human and divine affections which are appointed to take its place, yet has formed the subject not indeed of lamentation, but of holy thankfulness for the witness it bears to the immortal origin and end of our nature to one whose authority is almost without appeal in all questions relating to the influence of external things upon the pure human soul. . . . And if it were possible for us to recollect all the unaccountable and happy instincts of the careless time, and to reason upon them with the maturer judgment, we might arrive at more rapid and right results than either the philosophy or the sophisticated practice of art have yet attained."

The main idea of the *Ode* may be found in a little poem called *The Retreat*, by William Vaughan, a "Platonic" poet of the seventeenth century:

Happy those early days, when I  
Shined in my Angel-infancy!  
Before I understood this place  
Appointed for my second race,

Or taught my soul to fancy aught  
But a white celestial thought;  
When yet I had not walk'd above  
A mile or two from my first love,  
And looking back, at that short space  
Could see a glimpse of his bright face;  
When on some gilded cloud or flower  
My gazing soul would dwell an hour,  
And in those weaker glories spy,  
Some shadows of eternity;  
Before I taught my tongue to wound  
My conscience with a sinful sound,  
Or had the black art to dispense  
A several sin to every sense,  
But felt through all this fleshly dress  
Bright shoots of everlastingness.

O how I long to travel back,  
And tread again that ancient track!  
That I might once more reach that plain  
Where first I left my glorious train;  
From whence th' enlighten'd spirit sees  
That shady City of Palm trees:  
But ah! my soul with too much stay  
Is drunk, and staggers in the way:—  
Some men a forward motion love,  
But I by backward steps would move;  
And when this dust falls to the urn,  
In that state I came, return.

The theme of Wordsworth's *Ode* is, that with the passing of childhood many of the soul's possessions necessarily pass away, but its essential nature does not pass; the character of these early possessions, and their power to remain, though changed, indicate a heavenly pre-existence and a future immortality. Notice that he calls them not arguments but "intimations."

There are three stages in the development of the theme: (1) The attitude of the child towards nature. (2) The losses of these feelings that older life experi-

ences. (3) The spiritual possessions that remain permanently — “the strength in what remains behind.”

Professor W. D. MacClintock offers the following analysis:

1. A beauty and glory which once rested upon the earth for the child has passed away for the man. St. I-IV.
  - (a) This glory has passed away from the common sights of nature and from the rare. St. I-II.
  - (b) What a pity that we should thus complain while nature about is so joyous! Attempt made to rejoice. But some aspect of nature brings back the mood of regret. St. III-IV.
2. The coming and the going of this glory accounted for. St. V-VIII.
  - (a) It came with the child from his pre-existing state. St. V.
  - (b) It passes away.
    - (1) Because nature is so attractive to the child. St. VI.
    - (2) Because the child takes on the yoke of life as a result of his instinct for imitation. St. VII.

An exclamation of pity that the child must grow older and lose his early knowledge and feeling. St. VIII.

  - (3) Though much is gone, the soul's essential instincts remain, indicating a native and indestructible spiritual nature. St. IX.
  - (4) After this conclusion, nature is viewed again calmly and with more joy than when the poet was a child. St. X-XI.

Stanza VII is an epitome of man's life on earth. The “six years darling” especially in the mind of Wordsworth was Hartly Coleridge. “Humorous stage” (*line* 103) is quoted from Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. It means the stage on which are exhibited the moods, whims, caprices and manners of mankind.

Stanza VIII is a stumbling-block to many students. They cannot comprehend how a mere child can be the “best philosopher” and “mighty prophet.” Stopford

Brooke, in his *Theology in the English Poets*, helps to make the meaning clear. He says:

"We can only catch the main idea among expressions of the child as the best philosopher, the eye among the blind . . . the mighty prophet, the seer blest — expressions which taken separately have scarcely any recognizable meaning. By taking them all together, we feel rather than see that Wordsworth intended to say that the child, having lately come from a perfect existence, in which he saw truth directly, and was at home with God, retains, unknown to us, that vision — and, because he does, is the best philosopher, since he sees at once that which we through philosophy are endeavoring to reach; is the mighty prophet, because in his actions and speech he tells unconsciously the truths he sees, but the sight of which we have lost; is more closely haunted by God, more near to the immortal life, more purely and brightly free because he half shares in the pre-existent life and glory out of which he has come."

Stanza 9 has some difficult lines, particularly *lines 141-147*. Wordsworth himself gave an interpretation of them to Professor Price of Oxford (see Professor Price's letter in William Knight's edition of *Wordsworth*, The Macmillan Company, Vol. VIII, p. 201). When Price asked him what were those "fallings from us, vanishings," etc., for which above all other things he gave thanks, Wordsworth replied: "There was a time in my life when I had to push against something that resisted, to be sure that there was anything outside of me. I was sure of my own mind; everything else fell away, and vanished into thought." Moreover, Wordsworth thought that such experiences were common to childhood.

Stanza 11 should be studied in connection with *lines 88-102 in Tintern Abbey*, in which he says,

For I have learned  
To look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity, etc.





## 3

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,  
And while the young lambs bound  
As to the tabor's sound,  
To me alone there came a thought of grief;  
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,  
And I again am strong:  
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;  
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;  
I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,  
The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,  
And all the earth is gay;  
Land and sea  
Give themselves up to jollity,  
And with the heart of May  
Doth every Beast keep holiday;—  
Thou Child of Joy,  
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts,  
Thou happy Shepherd-Boy!

## 4

Ye blessed Creatures, I have heard the call  
 Ye to each other make; I see  
 The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;  
 My heart is at your festival,  
 My head hath its coronal,  
 The fulness of your bliss, I feel — I feel it all.  
 O evil day; if I were sullen  
 While Earth herself is adorning,

*fields of sleep* (line 28) — probably early morning when the fields were sleeping.



This sweet May-morning, 45  
 And the Children are culling  
 On every side,  
 In a thousand valleys far and wide,  
 Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,  
 And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm:— 50  
 I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!  
 —But there's a Tree, of many, one,  
 A single Field which I have looked upon,  
 Both of them speak of something that is gone:  
 The Pansy at my feet 55  
 Doth the same tale repeat:  
 Whither is fled the visionary gleam?  
 Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

## 5

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
 The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star, 60  
 Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
 And cometh from afar.  
 Not in entire forgetfulness,  
 And not in utter nakedness,  
 But trailing clouds of glory, do we come 65  
 From God, Who is our home:  
 Heaven lies about us in our infancy!  
 Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
 Upon the growing boy,  
 But he beholds the light, and whence it flows, 70  
 He sees it in his joy!

---

*prison house* (68) — the world; this life.

The youth, who daily farther from the east  
 Must travel, still is Nature's priest,  
 And by the vision splendid  
 Is on his way attended; 75  
 At length the man perceives it die away,  
 And fade into the light of common day.

## 6

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;  
 Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,  
 And even with something of a mother's mind, 80  
 And no unworthy aim,  
 The homely nurse doth all she can  
 To make her foster-child, her inmate man,  
 Forget the glories he hath known,  
 And that imperial palace whence he came. 85

## 7

Behold the child among his new-born blisses,  
 A six years' darling of a pigmy size!  
 See where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,  
 Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,  
 With light upon him from his father's eyes! 90  
 See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,  
 Some fragment from his dream of human life,  
 Shaped by himself with newly-learned art:  
 A wedding or a festival,  
 A mourning or a funeral; 95

---

*farther from the east* (72) — farther from infancy.  
*Imperial palace* (85) — his celestial home.

And this hath now his heart,  
 And unto this he frames his song;  
 Then will he fit his tongue  
 To dialogues of business, love, or strife;  
 But it will not be long 100  
 Ere this be thrown aside,  
 And with new joy and pride  
 The little Actor cons another part;  
 Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"  
 With all the Persons, down to palsied Age, 105  
 That Life brings with her in her equipage;  
 As if his whole vocation  
 Were endless imitation.

## 8

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie  
 Thy Soul's immensity; 110  
 Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep  
 Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,  
 That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,  
 Haunted forever by the eternal mind,—  
 Mighty Prophet; Seer blest! 115  
 On whom those truths do rest,  
 Which we are toiling all our lives to find,  
 In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;  
 Thou, over whom thy Immortality  
 Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave, 120  
 A Presence which is not to be put by;  
 Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might

Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,  
 Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke  
 The years to bring the inevitable yoke, 125  
 Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?  
 Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,  
 And custom lie upon thee with a weight,  
 Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

## 9

O joy! that in our embers 130  
 Is something that doth live,  
 That nature yet remembers  
 What was so fugitive!

The thought of our past years in me doth breed  
 Perpetual benediction: not indeed 135  
 For that which is most worthy to be blest —  
 Delight and liberty, the simple creed  
 Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,  
 With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast; —  
     Not for these I raise 140  
     The song of thanks and praise;  
     But for those obstinate questionings  
     Of sense and outward things;  
     Fallings from us, vanishings;  
     Blank misgivings of a creature 145  
 Moving about in worlds not realised;  
 High instincts before which our mortal nature

---

*heaven-born freedom on thy being's height* (123) — "Childhood is, as it were, the mountain-top, the natural type of freedom and nearest heaven, from which men descend by easy steps into the vale of manhood."

*embers* (130) — old age.

Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised;  
     But for those first affections,  
     Those shadowy recollections, 150  
     Which, be they what they may,  
 Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,  
 Are yet a master-light of all our seeing,  
     Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make  
 Our noisy years seem moments in the being 155  
 Of the Eternal Silence; truths that wake,  
     To perish never,  
 Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,  
     Nor man nor boy,  
 Nor all that is at enmity with joy, 160  
 Can utterly abolish or destroy!  
     Hence, in a season of calm weather,  
     Though inland far we be,  
 Our souls have sight of that immortal sea 165  
     Which brought us hither;  
     Can in a moment travel thither,  
 And see the children sport upon the shore,  
 And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

## 10

Then sing, ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song!  
     And let the young lambs bound 170  
     As to the tabor's sound!  
 We in thought will join your throng,

---

*be they what they may* (151) — to him they were "intimations of immortality."

*man nor boy* (159) — manhood and boyhood.

*calm weather* (162) — quiet moods.

*that immortal sea* (164) — the ocean of eternity.

Ye that pipe and ye that play,  
Ye that through your hearts to-day  
Feel the gladness of the May! 175

What though the radiance which was once so bright  
Be now forever taken from my sight,  
Though nothing can bring back the hour  
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;  
We will grieve not, rather find 180  
Strength in what remains behind;  
In the primal sympathy  
Which having been must ever be;  
In the soothing thoughts that spring  
Out of human suffering; 185  
In the faith that looks through death,  
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

## 11

And O ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,  
Forebode not any severing of our loves!  
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might; 190  
I only have relinquished one delight  
To live beneath your more habitual sway.  
I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,  
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;  
The innocent brightness of a new-born Day 195  
Is lovely yet;  
The Clouds that gather round the setting sun  
Do take a sober colouring from an eye  
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;



Another race hath been, and other palms are won.   200  
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,  
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,  
To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

—William Wordsworth.

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*Another race*, etc. (200) — the race has been run and the victory won.

## Rome



## ROME

(From *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto IV, Stanzas 78-82.)

Modern Rome stands thirty feet above the level of Ancient Rome, and when Lord Byron was there in 1817 no excavations had been made. Since that time, especially during the past twenty-five years, many of the ruins of its ancient splendors have been brought to light. Modern research has been able to do what Byron said could not be done: "trace the void . . . and say 'here was, or here is.' " Rome is no longer, thanks to these scientific explorations, "as the desert, where we steer stumbling o'er recollections." However, an immense amount of work still remains to be done.

Rome was founded 753 B. C., and increased until, as everybody knows, it became the capital of the world. Destructive fires occurred at various times, notably in 64 A. D., during the reign of Nero. Constantine, in 330 A. D., embellished Constantinople with many monuments and works of art from Rome. Between A. D. 408 and 445 the city was ravished by the Goths, the Vandals, and the Germans, and in 476 the Roman Empire was broken up. From the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries many buildings in Rome were used as fortresses by the nobles in their continual war upon one another. During what we call the Dark Ages many magnificent monuments and works of art were deliberately destroyed by the Romans themselves in order to make lime for their new palaces and houses. The splendid and beautiful old marble structures being pagan, the Christians of Rome

thought they were doing God-service when they melted them down into lime. Rome was destroyed quite as much by vandals from within as by vandals from without. But what was once the mistress of the world in military power is still the mistress of the world in human interest.

The transfiguring power of the poetic imagination is shown in the stanzas before us. Byron, standing in the midst of modern Rome with its "strange mixture," as Dr. Russell Forbes says, "of narrow streets, open squares, churches, fountains, ruins, new palaces, and dirt," saw, not these things, but the Niobe of Nations, childless and crownless in her voiceless woe. According to an old myth, Niobe had fourteen children, seven sons and seven daughters, of whom she was very proud. She boasted of them to Leto, who had only two children, and Leto, in revenge, persuaded the gods to destroy Niobe's children. Niobe is always regarded as the personification of grief. Rome was once the mother of kingdoms, and Byron's application of the old myth is very appropriate. The myth goes on to say that Niobe was turned into a stone in the figure of a woman sitting in the attitude of deep grief; hence Byron's phrase, "her voiceless woe." "An empty urn in her withered hand" is an allegorical representation of the empty tombs and sepulchres to be found everywhere in and about Rome. In the same stanza he says:

"The Scipios' tomb contains no ashes now;  
The very sepulchres lie tenantless  
Of their heroic dwellers."

The family tomb of the Scipios was discovered near the Appian Way a short distance out of Rome in 1780. The bones of many distinguished members of the family, with their inscriptions, were found. The bones were carried to Padua, and the original inscriptions removed to the Vatican. Visitors to Rome to-day are shown many such empty tombs, but only their brick or rough-stone walls remain; the beautiful marble with which they were all veneered was turned into lime or used in building churches long ago.

## ROME

O Rome! my country! city of the soul!

The orphans of the heart must turn to thee,  
Lone mother of dead empires! and control

In their shut breasts their petty misery.

What are our woes and sufferance? Come and see 5

The cypress, hear the owl, and plod your way  
O'er steps of broken thrones and temples, Ye!

Whose agonies are evils of a day —

A world is at our feet as fragile as our clay.

The Niobe of nations! there she stands, 10

Childless and crownless, in her voiceless woe;  
An empty urn within her withered hands,

Whose holy dust was scattered long ago;  
The Scipios' tomb contains no ashes now;

The very sepulchres lie tenantless 15  
Of their heroic dwellers: dost thou flow,



Old Tiber! through a marble wilderness?  
 Rise, with thy yellow waves, and mantle her distress.

The Goth, the Christian, Time, War, Flood, and Fire,  
 Have dealt upon the seven-hilled city's pride;      20  
 She saw her glories star by star expire,  
 And up the steep barbarian monarchs ride,  
 Where the car climbed the Capitol; far and wide  
 Temple and tower went down, nor left a site:  
 Chaos of ruins! who shall trace the void,      25  
 O'er the dim fragments cast a lunar light,  
 And say, "here was, or is," where all is doubly night?

The double night of ages, and of her,  
 Night's daughter, Ignorance, hath wrapt and wrap  
 All round us: we but feel our way to err:      30  
 The ocean hath its chart, the stars their map,  
 And Knowledge spreads them on her ample lap;  
 But Rome is as the desert, where we steer  
 Stumbling o'er recollections; now we clap  
 Our hands, and cry "Eureka!" it is clear —      35  
 When but some false mirage of ruin rises near.

---

*Through a marble wilderness* (line 17) — the great buildings, monuments, and statues of Ancient Rome were chiefly of marble.

*up the steep*, etc. (22-23) — the carriage-road by which the chariot ("car") of the victorious general ascended the Capitoline Hill in the triumphal processions, in which "barbarian monarchs" were often led. — H. F. Tozer.

*trace the void* (25) — explore the waste places.

*lunar* (26) — pale or feeble.

*Eureka* (35) — "I have found it."

*some false mirage of ruin* (36) — ruins suggesting deceptive historical association.

Alas! the lofty city! and alas!

The trebly hundred triumphs! and the day  
When Brutus made the dagger's edge surpass  
The conqueror's sword in bearing fame away! 40  
Alas for Tully's voice, and Vergil's lay,

And Livy's pictured page! — but these shall be  
Her resurrection; all beside — decay.

Alas, for Earth, for never shall we see,  
That brightness in her eye she bore when Rome 45  
was free!

— Lord Byron.

Byron had been practically driven out of England by his enemies, and he is doubtless thinking of himself when he speaks, in the first stanza of "orphans of the heart," but he contrasts the littleness of all such personal desolation with the desolation of Rome.

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*trebly hundred triumphs* (38) — Byron has a note on this passage in which he quotes Orosius as saying that there were 320 Roman triumphal processions.

*When Brutus made, etc.* (39) — referring to the murder of Cæsar by Brutus. This act won greater fame than the victories of generals.

*but these shall be, etc.* (42) — the works of Roman orators, poets, and historians shall not perish.



## **Days**



## DAYS

Emerson's favorite among his own poems was *Days*. It was not only his favorite, but the theme of it comes up again and again in his essays. The following passages, quoted from them, perfectly explain the poem — explain it as well as if they had been written for the purpose:

"Silent, passive, even sulkily, Nature offers every morning her wealth to man. She is immensely rich; he is welcome to her entire goods; but she speaks no word, will not so much as beckon or cough; only this, she is careful to leave all her doors ajar — towers, hall, stateroom, and cellar. If he takes her hint and uses her goods, she speaks no word; if he slumbers and starves, she says nothing."

"The Days are ever divine as to the first Aryans. They come and go, like muffled and veiled figures sent from a distant, friendly party; but they say nothing, and, if we do not use the gifts they bring, they carry them as silently away."

"Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year. No man has learned anything rightly until he knows that every day is Doomsday. 'Tis the old secret of the gods that they come in low disguises."

The Days are called "hypocritic" because they come bearing their gifts in disguise. From their marvelous store we may choose what we will — diadems and kingdoms and stars of love and life and hope and work, or only food for the body and the things of the flesh; or we may even choose the fagots that set on fire and destroy all the finer things of the spirit.

The poem is one of great beauty as well as great power. It is a "criticism of life" in the highest sense. No one who has fully learned its meaning can ever forget it. Continually he will see the Days marching by in endless file, "muffled and dumb like barefoot der-



vishes," each bearing in her hands all manner of gifts; and when his choice is foolish or evil he will not fail to see the scorn that clouds her shadowed brow as she turns and departs, never, through infinite ages, to pass again that way or offer him again her store.

If teachers are looking for a text, here it is:

## DAYS

Daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days,  
Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,  
And marching single in an endless file,  
Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.  
To each they offer gifts after his will,  
Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all.  
I, in my pleached garden, watched the pomp,  
Forgot my morning wishes, hastily  
Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day  
Turned and departed silent. I, too late,  
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson.

---

*"I, in my pleached garden,"* etc., represents humanity generally, in choosing the trifling gifts the Day brings, rather than the gifts that are beyond price or praise, and how the Day, under her solemn fillet, looks with silent scorn upon such choice of gifts.

*"Pleached"* means interwoven, like the boughs of trees.

*"Pomp"* here means a pageant or procession.

## The Problem



## THE PROBLEM

The best known and perhaps the greatest of Emerson's poems is *The Problem*, and it is doubtless one of the three or four best poems in American literature.

The chief idea contained in it is the idea of sincerity — a sincerity whole and absolute, like that of nature herself, and this sincerity is possible only to those who yield themselves to the Soul of the universe working in them. Emerson believed that all such are "inspired," whether they be artists, architects, poets, preachers, or writers of sacred books. In a letter to John Sterling he said:

"All thoughts are holy when they come floating up to us in magical newness from the hidden Life, and 'tis no wonder we are enamoured with these Muses and Graces. . . . Yet how we thank and greet, and almost adore the person who has once or twice in a lifetime treated anything sublimely, and certified to us that he beheld the Law."

*The Problem* was originally called *The Priest*, and its inception may be found in the following extracts from Emerson's journal of August 28, 1838:

"It is very grateful to my feelings to go into a Roman Cathedral, yet I look as my countrymen do at the Roman priesthood. It is very grateful to me to go into an English Church and hear the liturgy read, yet nothing would induce me to be the English priest.

"I find an unpleasant dilemma in this, nearer home. I dislike to be a clergyman and refuse to be one, yet how rich a music would be to me a holy clergyman in my town. It seems to me he cannot be a man, quite and whole; yet how plain is the need of one and how high, yes, highest, is the function. Here is a division of labor that I like not: a man must sacrifice his manhood for the social good. Something is wrong; I see not what."

Here we have stated in prose the question or problem which he put into poetic form a year later (November 10, 1839) in *The Problem*. The inference is that one cannot be wholly sincere and independent in his thinking if he is circumscribed by the creeds, rituals, forms and ceremonials of sectarianism. The only creed to which Emerson subscribed was stated by him in these words: "I believe in the still small voice; and that voice is Christ within me." No priest or bishop or council had any authority to tell him what to believe, or what manner of worship to follow.

Holding this opinion, he points out in *The Problem* the masterpieces of the world's thought in art and architecture and literature, and declares that they all grew out of a deep sincerity and an absolute devotion to the voice within. The work of Phidias the Greek sculptor, the old Greek and Roman oracles, the Bible, the national litanies, St. Peter's Cathedral at Rome, the Parthenon, the Pyramids, the great English abbeys, the law of Moses, were all the results of that sincerity, in harmony with "the vast soul that o'er him planned." Every one of these great things is as natural as the grass or the woodbird's nest. Vanity, cunning, cleverness had no part in them. They came out of the heart of nature; they grew out of the deepest instincts of the race. And because they so originated and so grew they still inspire mankind — the word unto the prophet spoken is still the law of the world, and the word by seers or sibyls told is still a part of the thought of the human race.

After meeting Carlyle, Emerson wrote, "The comfort of meeting a man of genius is that he speaks sincerely";

and he found this element of sincerity to be the chief characteristic of every great work of genius — always and everywhere associated with what he called the Over-Soul, or the Spirit of the Universe, or God.

His son, Edward Waldo Emerson, in the notes to the Centenary Edition of *Emerson's Works*, refers to the following passages from the *Essays* as bearing upon *The Problem*:

"Every genuine work of art has as much reason for being as earth and sun." — *Society and Solitude*.

"Santa Croce [a beautiful church in Florence] and the Dome of St. Peter's are lame copies after a divine model." — *Essay on History*.

"Above his will [the artist's] and out of his sight he is necessitated by the air he breathes and the idea on which he and his contemporaries live and toil, to share the manners of his times, without knowing what that manner is. Now that which is inevitable in the work has a higher charm than individual talent can ever give, inasmuch as the artist's pen or chisel seems to have been held and guided by a gigantic hand to inscribe a line in the history of the human race. This circumstance gives a value to the Egyptian hieroglyphics, to the Indian, Chinese and Mexican idols, however gross and shapeless. They denote the height of the human soul in that hour, and were not fantastic, but sprung from a necessity as deep as the world." — *Essay on Art*.

Notice the wide scope of illustrations used in *The Problem* of works that all come under Emerson's law of sincerity and devotion. We find here Greek art, pagan oracles, the Bible, Catholic architecture, Greek architecture, Egyptian construction, and English architecture. They serve not only to illustrate the universality of the principle announced, but they serve equally well to illustrate the breadth of Emerson's interests and sympathies.



## THE PROBLEM

I like a church; I like a cowl;  
 I love a prophet of the soul;  
 And on my heart monastic aisles  
 Fall like sweet strains, or pensive smiles;  
 Yet not for all his faith can see 5  
 Would I that cowed churchman be.

Why should the vest on him allure,  
 Which I could not on me endure?

Not from a vain or shallow thought  
 His awful Jove young Phidias brought; 10  
 Never from lips of cunning fell  
 The thrilling Delphic oracle;  
 Out from the heart of nature rolled  
 The burdens of the Bible old;  
 The litanies of nations came, 15  
 Like the volcano's tongue of flame,  
 Up from the burning core below, —  
 The canticles of love and woe;

---

*Vest* (line 7) — vestments, ecclesiastical robes.

*Phidias* (10) — the most famous sculptor of the ancient Greeks.

*His awful Jove* (10) — the masterpiece of Phidias, a colossal statue of the god of war, executed for a temple at Olympia, in Greece.

*Delphic oracle* (12) — a celebrated oracle of Apollo at Delphi on the slope of Mt. Parnassus. The priestess who delivered the oracle was at first always a young maiden but later always a woman not younger than fifty, usually selected from some family of poor country people. The oracle was implicitly believed in as being from Apollo.

*Litanies* (15) — forms of public prayer.

*Canticles* (18) — songs or hymns.

The hand that rounded Peter's dome,  
 And groined the aisles of Christian Rome,      20  
 Wrought in a sad sincerity;  
 Himself from God he could not free;  
 He builded better than he knew; —  
 The conscious stone to beauty grew.

Know'st thou what wove yon woodbird's nest      25  
 Of leaves, and feathers from her breast?  
 Or how the fish outbuilt her shell,  
 Painting with morn each annual cell?  
 Or how the sacred pine-tree adds  
 To her old leaves new myriads?      30  
 Such and so grew these holy piles,  
 Whilst love and terror laid the tiles.  
 Earth proudly wears the Parthenon,

---

*Peter's dome* (19) — the cathedral of St. Peter's in Rome; it is not only the chief glory of modern Rome but it is the most magnificent modern structure in the world. The most celebrated architects of the time were engaged upon it, among them being Raphael, Michael Angelo and Bernini. Just whose hand "rounded Peter's dome" is uncertain; probably the architect Della Porta. This matchless dome is 440 feet high, the building covers an area of 240,000 square feet, required 176 years to build, and cost about seventy millions of dollars, a sum which would be far greater to-day.

*The aisles of Christian Rome* (20) — in addition to St. Peter's there are several hundred other churches in Rome, most of them of marvelous beauty of architecture and adornment, and erected during the centuries of the greatest religious zeal. No one can look upon them and not agree with Emerson's statement that their builders "wrought in a sad sincerity."

*These holy piles* (31) — the great churches in Rome.

*The Parthenon* (33) — the temple of Athena at Athens, a great Doric temple, the most perfect specimen of Greek architecture. Phidias superintended its construction. It is now in a ruined condition, caused by the explosion of a bomb in 1687 while the Turks were using it as a magazine.

As the best gem upon her zone;  
 And Morning opes with haste her lids, 35  
 To gaze upon the Pyramids;  
 O'er England's abbeys bends the sky,  
 As on its friends, with kindred eye;  
 For, out of Thought's interior sphere,  
 These wonders rose to upper air; 40  
 And Nature gladly gave them place,  
 Adopted them into her race,  
 And granted them an equal date  
 With Andes and with Ararat.  
 These temples grew as grows the grass; 45  
 Art might obey, but not surpass.  
 The passive Master lent his hand  
 To the vast soul that o'er him planned;  
 And the same power that reared the shrine,  
 Bestrode the tribes that knelt within. 50  
 Ever the fiery Pentecost  
 Girds with one flame the countless host,  
 Trances the heart through chanting choirs,  
 And through the priest the mind inspires.  
  
 The word unto the prophet spoken 55  
 Was writ on tables yet unbroken;

---

*England's Abbeys* (37) — the most beautiful and majestic buildings in England are its abbeys and cathedrals. St. Paul's, Westminster, Canterbury, York, Gloucester, Wells, Chester, and other cathedrals, and the abbey ruins at Melrose and at Tintern seem indeed to fulfill Emerson's description. They are as true to nature as are the rivers and the hills.

*Pentecost* (51) — the day of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the disciples. It appeared like a tongue of fire.

The word by seers or sibyls told,  
In groves of oak, or fanes of gold,  
Still floats upon the morning wind,  
Still whispers to the willing mind. 60  
One accent of the Holy Ghost  
The heedless world hath never lost.  
I know what say the fathers wise, —  
The Book itself before me lies,  
Old *Chrysostom*, best Augustine, 65  
And he who blent both in his line,  
The younger *Golden Lips* or mines,  
Taylor, the Shakespeare of divines.  
His words are music in my ear,  
I see his cowed portrait dear; 70  
And yet, for all his faith could see,  
I would not the good bishop be.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson.

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*Sibyls* (57) — the name given to certain inspired prophetesses of antiquity. There were ten of them, the Cumean sibyl being the most celebrated.

*Old Chrysostom* (65) — John of Antioch, Bishop of Constantinople. Two hundred years after his death the Ecumenical Council gave him the name Chrysostom, or Golden Mouth.

*Taylor* (68) — Jeremy Taylor, author of *Holy Living and Holy Dying*. Emerson says in his journal: "I have thought him a Christian Plato; so rich and great was his philosophy."



## Ode to the West Wind





## ODE TO THE WEST WIND

Shelley was reformer and prophet as well as poet. It is now a hundred years since he was expelled from University College, Oxford, for writing a boyish tract with a foolish and evil title; to-day the room he occupied is the "Shelley Lecture Room," and under a great glass dome near by in the same college rests the exquisite white marble effigy of his slight figure in naked purity — the most beautiful memorial in Oxford. A little distance away among the priceless treasures of the Bodleian Library are a curl of his fair hair, his watch, his bunch of seals, the little volume of Sophocles which he held in his hand when he was drowned in the Gulf of Spezzia, and other little personal belongings. When his ashes were laid by the Aurelian wall in the Protestant cemetery at Rome, one of the saddest and one of the most beautiful spots in all the world, there were few or none who dreamed that Oxford would take his memory into its bosom and that the world would recognize him as the greatest of all lyric poets and as a reformer whose voice was the voice of a coming dawn. Slavery of every sort he hated with a fiery hatred; freedom of service, freedom of worship, freedom of thought, freedom of speech, — freedom of man in the widest sense — and universal charity, he loved with a flaming love. As Oxford has changed its attitude toward him personally from one of persecution to one of reverence, so the world has come to adopt most of his principles as the shibboleth of twentieth-century regeneration for mankind; and from

his obscure grave by the Roman wall his voice is heard around the world.

He wrote "as the prophet of liberty, equality, fraternity, and a Golden Age"; but he also wrote as the poet of his own heart, his own soul. These two elements are combined in perfect fusion in the *Ode to the West Wind*. "The poem," as Professor Dowden says, "is the clarion cry of hope in the presence of tumultuous ruin and inevitable decay," but the music of this hope for humanity is made on the lyre of his personal emotions and the passion of his own heart. The poem was written one October day in a wood on the banks of the Arno near Florence when a tempestuous wind was sweeping the Cisalpine region and gathering the clouds for a terrific storm, and thunder and lightning, hail and rain. The theme of the poem at the beginning is the wind as destroyer and preserver, but the thought of the wind as a destroyer is exhausted as the poem proceeds and its character as a preserver continues to the last and triumphs in the splendid imagery and prophecy of the closing lines.

In the first stanza he apostrophizes the wind as the unseen power that drives before it the stricken leaves, yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red; but it also carries the winged seeds to their wintry graves where they are preserved until the wind of spring blows over the warm earth, brings them to life again, and plain and hill are filled with sweet buds like flocks that feed in air.

In the second stanza the theme is carried on but new images are introduced. He sees the wind as a stream sweeping through the sky carrying on its surface clouds

like decaying leaves. Then the image, still true to the central theme, changes again, and he conceives of the spreading, winding, ever-changing clouds as the hair of some Maenad floating on the wind; they are the locks of the approaching storm. He sees in the sky the same thing he saw in the wood. The wind is still the destroyer; and the second stanza closes with another aspect of the same theme: the wind as the dirge of the dying year of which the approaching night is to be the dome of a vast sepulchre.

In the third stanza the wind passes from the earth and the sky to the sea, rousing by its terrors the sleeping Mediterranean, cleaving the Atlantic into chasms for its pathway, and disturbing the plants in ocean's bed. In a note Shelley says: "The phenomenon alluded to at the conclusion of the third stanza is well known to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathizes with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it." Notice in this stanza the exquisite picture of the old moss-grown and flower-covered palaces and towers reflected in the still waters of the Mediterranean. No artist ever painted a truer picture.

In stanza four he unites himself with leaf and cloud and wave, thus gathering up in order all of the images that have gone before and continuing the theme. But the thought of the wind as a destroyer is not mentioned again, but only as a preserver of the seeds of life and truth. He, too, like the wind, was "tameless, and swift, and proud," but brutal persecution and the sadness of

his heart had driven him upon the thorns of life. Stanza four carries the theme over from the sphere of nature to the sphere of the human race, with Shelley as the agent. It is not a side issue, but an essential step in the organic unity of the poem.

In the closing stanza the theme reverts to the original image of the wind in the wood, but as a preserver and not as a destroyer; and a new but kindred image, that of the play of the wind upon a dying fire, is introduced. His passionate cry is that his words and thoughts may be scattered among mankind to be quickened in due time in a more favoring soil into the fruits and flowers of a New Day for all the race; and may the voice of the wind be the trumpet of a prophecy of that New Day! As Stopford Brooke says: "The last thought has now been reached, the last realm over which the wind is sweeping. It has passed through the forests of earth, through the clouds of the sky, into the depths of ocean, through the woods and sky and ocean of Shelley's heart; and then, at the very point and climax of emotion, it leaves himself and sweeps through all mankind, bearing away with it dead things and the seeds of new. Out of the personal Shelley passes into the universal, and at that moment the future opened to him. Beyond the storm, beyond the winter it ushers in, he sees the new awakened world, the birth of all the seeds, the outburst as of a spring in humanity;

O Wind,  
If winter comes, can spring be far behind?

This is the lyric of lyrics. It is the hymn of our own



world. It ought to be set to music by a great musician, but he should have the genius of Beethoven.”

## ANALYSIS

- I. The Wind is conceived as both destroyer and preserver, *lines 1-14*
  1. The dead leaves are driven before it (1-5).
  2. And the seeds of future life (5-14).
- II. The idea of the Wind as destroyer continued (15-28).
  1. The Wind compared to a stream (15).
  2. And the clouds like dead leaves (16-17).
  3. Or like messengers of the rain and lightning (18).
  4. Or like a fierce Maenad's hair (20-23) spread on the surface of the wind-stream (15-23).
  5. The Wind compared to a dying year (23-24).
  6. And the night to its vast sepulchre (24-28).
- III. The idea of the Wind as destroyer continued (29-42).
  1. It passes over the Mediterranean and destroys the images on its surface (29-36).
  2. It passes over the Atlantic and the vegetation in ocean's bed trembles with fear (36-42).
- IV. The theme is carried over from nature to the poet's life by means of the figures of leaf, cloud, and wave already used (43-56).
- V. The theme widens to include all humanity, with the idea of the Wind as preserver (56-70).
  1. The poet like a lyre making music for mankind (56-61).
  2. His thoughts scattered to quicken new ideas (63-64).
  3. Or like sparks among mankind (65-67).
  4. His lips like a trumpet of hope and prophecy of a new dawn for the human race (68-70).

## ODE TO THE WEST WIND

## 1

O, Wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,  
 Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead  
 Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,



Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,  
 Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O, Thou, 5  
 Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,  
 Each like a corpse within its grave, until  
 Thine azure sister of the spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill 10  
 (Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)  
 With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;  
 Destroyer and preserver; hear, O hear!

## 2

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's  
 commotion, 15

Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,  
 Shook from the tangled boughs of heaven and ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread  
 On the blue surface of thine airy surge,  
 Like the bright hair uplifted from the head 20

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge  
 Of the horizon to the zenith's height  
 The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge  
 Of the dying year, to which this closing night  
 Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre, 25

---

*angels* (line 18) — messengers. This is the original meaning of the word.

*fierce Maenad* (21) — a frenzied nymph in Greek mythology.

Vaulted with all thy congregated might  
 Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere  
 Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: O, hear!

## 3

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams  
 The blue Mediterranean, where he lay, 30  
 Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,  
 And saw in sleep old palaces and towers  
 Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers 35  
 So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou  
 For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below  
 The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear  
 The sapless foliage of the ocean, know 40

Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,  
 And tremble and despoil themselves: O, hear!

## 4

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;  
 If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;  
 A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share 45

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*congregated might of vapours* (26 and 27) — "this brave o'er-hanging firmament . . . appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors." — *Hamlet*, Act III, scene 2, line 311.

*Baiae* (32) — not far from Naples.

The impulse of thy strength, only less free  
Than thou, O, uncontrollable! If even  
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,  
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed 50  
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.  
Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!  
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed 55  
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

## 5

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:  
What if my leaves are falling like its own!  
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone, 60  
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,  
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe  
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!  
And, by the incantation of this verse, 65

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth  
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!  
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,  
If winter comes, can spring be far behind? 70

— Percy Bysshe Shelley.



## The Cloud





## THE CLOUD

To float with the Cloud on the journey which Shelley takes us requires that the imagination shall be well under control, but so does the reading of any genuine poem; and the control of the imagination can be cultivated just as the control of the reasoning powers or of the memory can be cultivated. The number of pictures in *The Cloud* is amazing, and so is the rapidity with which they follow one another; yet it is not a kaleidoscopic view which one gets, but a series of clear and distinct images, all connected in the most vital manner with the central conception of the poem. The first stanza has five complete pictures, the second two, the third two, the fourth one, the fifth four, the sixth two. But each of these complete pictures is really a group of smaller pictures, — for example, the first picture in the second stanza (*lines 13-16*) is made up of three distinct pictures, and the single group comprising the fourth stanza is composed of six pictures. In the opening line of the poem there are the three pictures represented by the Cloud, the showers, and the thirsting flowers, but these three are grouped in one, and the idea is made complete by the second line, in which we see another picture showing the vapor arising from sea and river to form the Cloud. This process of grouping is carried on throughout the poem.

Lines three and four give us an exquisite miniature of leaves in the perfect calm of noonday, protected from the sun by the Cloud. Lines 5-8 open up the whole expanse of the earth's orbit and we hear the twitter of the morn-

ing birds in the dewy groves as they are rocked on the bosom of mother earth while she sweeps about the sun. The stanza closes with a storm in which the fields are white with sleet and hail, the hoarse laugh of the thunder is heard and the Cloud finally dissolves in a downpour of rain.

In the second stanza the seasons have changed, the great mountain pines are groaning under the weight of snow, and the Cloud hangs about the top of the mountain in the arms of the blast. The figure changes again: the lightning in its cloudy watch-tower acts as pilot, and the thunder roars like a giant of the elder world. Above the Cloud the sky is blue and smiling, while the lightning, lured by the love of some mysterious but kindred spirit in the great deep, is guiding the Cloud at his will.

There are two pictures in the third stanza: one may be called "Morning" and the other "Evening." The first is a picture of sunrise, blood-red, with meteor eyes, and with streamers like burning plumes — a sunrise riding up out of the rim of the world on the back of dark drifting Clouds, while the morning star stands lustreless in the light of breaking day. It is a sunrise such as Turner might have painted. But not content with drawing the scene once, Shelley makes another picture and compares the sunrise on the rolling Clouds to an eagle on the top of an earthquake-shaken mountain crag. In the "Evening" picture the Cloud hangs like a speck in the crimson glow of the uttermost west, as still as a dove upon her nest.

Stanza 4 may be called "Moonlight." It is midnight, the sky is overcast with dry fleecy Clouds, a light breeze is blowing, the moon is at the full. To the watcher below

the moon seems to break through and in and out of the fleecy Clouds, and with every widening of the rift the stars fly out like a swarm of golden bees. The moon and the stars are reflected in the waters below until the waters seem to be paved in their silver and gold; and the waters themselves appear like strips of the blue sky fallen through the rifts in the Cloud. How perfect the picture is, but how different from the picture of the morning or the picture of the sunset hour. And yet, no matter how the pictures may vary, the central theme of the Cloud dominates them all.

Stanza 5 presents a series of cloud-pictures with great rapidity. First there is a shining Cloud around the sun, followed by a ring around the moon. Then the whirlwind begins to blow, the stars seem to reel and swim among the Clouds, and the mountains and volcanoes are wrapped in their mist. Then the whole heavens, from horizon to horizon, are covered with a pall, upheld by the mountains, as columns support a roof. At last the storm is over, the rainbow swings across space as the triumphal arch of the Cloud — the rainbow woven by the sun ("the sphere-fire") while the moist earth is laughing below.

The closing stanza is the poetic, but thoroughly scientific, statement of the origin and nature of the Cloud. It is born of sun and water, it is nursed in the sky, it changes its form but it cannot die, for it goes through the same cycle of changes forever.

I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,  
And out of the caverns of rain,  
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,  
I arise and upbuild it again.

Even here we have a remarkable number of figures and images combining to build up the blue dome of heaven (the cenotaph of the Cloud), and tear it down again.

But it is not enough to see all of these pictures one by one with the mind's eye, no matter how clearly, though this is the first essential. To read *The Cloud* with something of the feeling in which it was written one must conceive of it all as a single picture, a great canvas, in which the spirit of the Cloud is moving like a thing alive, like a god of the old pagan world; and the reader's imagination must so fuse all of the separate parts in the glow of its flame that they will make a harmonious whole "without rent or seam or any such thing." *The Cloud* is in no sense a descriptive poem — it is vastly more and different. It is akin to the nature-myths of the old Greek world. The Cloud is represented as an eternal primeval force alive with energy and activity and manifesting itself in myriad forms and colors. This is the central conception or theme of the poem; it vitalizes every line, gives significance to every image, and lends majesty and power to the whole.

#### THE CLOUD

##### 1

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,  
From the seas and the streams;  
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid  
In their noonday dreams.



From my wings are shaken the dews that waken 5  
     The sweet birds every one,  
 When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,  
     As she dances about the sun.  
 I wield the flail of the lashing hail,  
 And whiten the green plains under, 10  
 And then again I dissolve it in rain,  
     And laugh as I pass in thunder.

## 2

I sift the snow on the mountains below,  
     And their great pines groan aghast;  
 And all the night 'tis my pillow white, 15  
     While I sleep in the arms of the blast.  
 Sublime on the towers of my skyey bowers,  
     Lightning, my pilot, sits;  
 In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,  
     It struggles and howls at fits; 20  
 Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,  
     This pilot is guiding me,  
 Lured by the love of the genii that move  
     In the depths of the purple sea;  
 Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills, 25  
     Over the lakes and the plains,  
 Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,  
     The Spirit he loves remains;  
 And I all the while bask in heaven's blue smile,  
     Whilst he is dissolving in rains. 30

---

*their mother's breast (line 7). — the earth.*  
*genii (23) — spirits.*



## 3

The sanguine sunrise, with his meteor eyes,  
 And his burning plumes outspread,  
 Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,  
 When the morning star shines dead ;  
 As on the jag of a mountain crag, 35  
 Which an earthquake rocks and swings,  
 An eagle alit one moment may sit  
 In the light of its golden wings,  
 And when sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,  
 Its ardours of rest and of love, 40  
 And the crimson pall of eve may fall  
 From the depths of heaven above,  
 With wings folded I rest, on my airy nest,  
 As still as a brooding dove.

## 4

That orbèd maiden with white fire laden 45  
 Whom mortals call the moon,  
 Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,  
 By the midnight breezes strewn ;  
 And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,  
 Which only the angels hear, 50  
 May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,  
 The stars peep behind her and peer ;  
 And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,  
 Like a swarm of golden bees,

---

*sanguine* (31) — blood-red.

*rack* (33) — dark drifting clouds.

*with white fire laden* (45) — Of course, the moon has no "fire" of its own ; its light is reflected from the sun.

When I widen the rent of my wind-built tent, 55  
Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,  
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,  
Are each paved with the moon and these.

## 5

I bind the sun's throne with a burning zone,  
And the moon's with a girdle of pearl; 60  
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim,  
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.  
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,  
Over a torrent sea,  
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof, 65  
The mountains its columns be.  
The triumphal arch through which I march  
With hurricane, fire, and snow,  
When the powers of the air are chained to my chair,  
Is the million-coloured bow: 70  
The sphere-fire above its soft colours wove,  
While the moist earth was laughing below.

## 6

I am the daughter of earth and water,  
And the nursling of the sky;  
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores; 75  
I change, but I cannot die.  
For after the rain when with never a stain,  
The pavilion of heaven is bare,  
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams,  
Build up the blue dome of air, 80

---

*these* (58) — the stars.

I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,  
And out of the caverns of rain,  
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,  
I arise and upbuild it again.

— Percy Bysshe Shelley.

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*cenotaph* (81) — an empty tomb.

Concerning *lines* 17-30, Mr. W. J. Alexander says: "What natural phenomenon is described in the poetical language of these lines is by no means clear. Since the pilot is the lightning, Shelley may, perhaps, have thought that the motion of clouds is influenced by electric forces existing in the earth, and may represent these forces by 'genii.' The pilot moves the cloud over that part of the earth where he dreams the spirit (the electric force) remains."

## Ode to a Nightingale



## ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

The great odes of Keats are six in number: *Ode to a Nightingale*, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, *Ode to Psyche*, *To Autumn*, *Ode on Melancholy*, and *Ode on Indolence* — all written between the spring of 1819 and the autumn of that year. This was the period of his best work, and these odes are unequaled in English literature. Keats was then twenty-four years of age.

Swinburne thus estimates the group :

"Of these perhaps the two nearest to absolute perfection, to the triumphant achievement and accomplishment of the very utmost beauty possible to human words, may be that *To Autumn* and that *On a Grecian Urn*; the most radiant, fervent, and musical is that *To a Nightingale*; the most pictorial, and perhaps the tenderest in its ardor of passionate fancy, is that *To Psyche*; the subtlest in sweetness of thought and feeling is that *On Melancholy*. Greater lyrical poetry the world may have seen than any that is in these; lovelier it surely has never seen, nor ever can it possibly see."

The *Ode to a Nightingale* is the most personal of them all. Mr. Robert Bridges, the present Poet Laureate, says of it: "I could not name an English poem of the same length which contains so much beauty as this ode."

It was in May of 1819 that this poem was written. Keats was residing at Hampstead with his friend Charles Armitage Brown, and was in deep grief over the recent death of his brother Tom, and over the knowledge of his own fatal illness with consumption, the family disease, of which he himself died two years later; moreover his emotions were deeply stirred with his love for Fanny Brawne — a love which he realized his physical condi-



tion made hopeless. Add to these things the fact that the Reviewers were pouring their brutal abuse upon his head, and some idea may be formed of the state of his sensitive but manly soul. "One morning," says Brown, "he took his chair from the breakfast table to the grass-plot under a plum (where a nightingale made its nest) where he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house, I perceived he had some scraps of paper in his hand, and these he was quickly thrusting behind the books. On inquiry, I found these scraps, four or five in number, contained his poetic feeling on the song of our nightingale. The writing was not well legible; and it was difficult to arrange the stanzas on so many scraps. With his assistance I succeeded, and this was his *Ode to a Nightingale*."

The present occupants of the house inform me that it was a large plane-tree (the American sycamore) under which Keats wrote the poem. This tree still stands in the yard, and nearly every year a nightingale builds her nest in it. Perhaps Brown wrote *plane* and the printer made it *plum*.

Concerning the English nightingale, Mr. Arthur C. Downer, of Oxford University, says:

"April is the month in which the nightingale returns from North-west Africa, and upon its reappearance in this country it seems filled with joy. It dwells in woods and groves near to waters, such woods as are still found at Hampstead. Hour by hour, and day after day, the bird pours forth its flood of song, and in the night its voice is often heard more rich and striking, because of the hush of all competing sounds."

The music of the nightingale is thus analyzed by Mr. Robert Bridges:

"The song of the nightingale is, to the hearer, full of assertion, promise, and cheerful expectancy, and of pleading and tender passionate overflowing in long drawn-out notes, interspersed with plenty of playfulness and conscious exhibition of musical skill. Whatever pain or sorrow may be expressed by it, it is idealized — that is, it is not the sorrow of a sufferer but the perfect expression of sorrow by an artist, who must have felt, but is not feeling; and the ecstasy of the nightingale is stronger than its sorrow, although different hearers may be differently affected according to their moods."

Keats in a sad mood gave it its immortal interpretation. In studying the poem the mistake should not be made of thinking it was the particular nightingale he had heard that morning singing in the Hampstead garden that he addresses his ode to, but as Palgrave says, "*a type of the race imagined as singing in some far-off scene of woodland mystery and beauty. Thither he sighs to follow her.*"

The stages of his emotion are easy to follow. He begins with a description of the effect produced upon him by the song: it is like that of an opiate. This effect is realized through his being "too happy in thy happiness." Keats was remarkably sensitive to all sweet sights and sounds; so sensitive that they sometimes made him tremble and weep for joy. On one occasion he was so overcome by the influence of a beautiful scene in nature that he was unable to rise from his seat on the ground. Perhaps the soul of no other English poet was ever so perfectly attuned to the harmony of exquisite sights and sounds. The statement in the opening stanza is therefore doubtless literally true.

He follows this in the next two stanzas with the wish for the aid of some draught of vintage in order that he may forget his own sad estate and join in the joy of the

happy songster — forget “the weariness, the fever, and the fret” with which his soul at that moment was so heavy. The line

“Where youth grows pale and spectre-thin and dies” doubtless has reference to the death of his brother Tom, of consumption. The sadness of the lines in the third stanza is equalled only by their beauty. In writing about his sister a little later Keats said: “It runs in my head that we shall all die young.”

— “beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes  
Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow.”

But he rejects the thought of the need of wine and determines to fly with the spirit of the nightingale upon the wings of Poesy — upon those viewless wings of the imagination which he possessed in such richness. And so he fancies himself already with the songster; it is night and the moon and stars are in their glory. There is no light save that made by them. Far above the earth, he cannot see what flowers are below him, but he can guess them all — the hawthorn, the violets, the sweetbrier, the musk-rose, and the rest “wherewith the seasonable month endows the grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild.”

Thus, seeing but dimly, he listens; and in his ecstasy he feels how sweet it would be to die thus at midnight with no pain, while the nightingale is pouring forth its soul in such joy and with his own soul in perfect harmony with it.

The thought of dying suggests, by way of contrast, the immortality of the nightingale of which this particular nightingale is the type. The song he hears is the same

song heard in ancient days. The individual dies, but the song goes on forever and forever. The song that Keats heard a hundred years ago is still heard in Hampstead Heath. The seventh stanza is matchless in its beauty and its magic power. Lovers of poetry agree that these lines are of extraordinary loveliness. "We read the words," says Mr. Downer, "and seem to behold, in high romance, the shadowy enchanter's castle in a kingdom by the sea, the lonely tower of which encloses an imprisoned princess, held in duress; and when the rich full note of the nightingale breaks upon the captive ear, she throws open her window to listen and to look out over the wild waves for the ship that shall bring the knight of her deliverance."

The word "forlorn" calls the poet back from the far-off days of Ruth, the magic casements, the faery lands, to himself and his unhappy condition. The fancy cheated him for awhile and he was away with the nightingale through the Middle Ages, and Biblical times, and beyond perilous seas, but the spell is over. The plaintive anthem fades away and is gone. "No more for him the sweet beguilement."

#### ANALYSIS

- I. The effect of the Nightingale's song, with associated thoughts, is like that of an opiate. *Lines 1-10.*
- II. The poet longs for some draught of wine to make him lose himself and follow the Nightingale and forget the griefs of life (11-30).
- III. The need of wine is rejected, and he follows on the wings of imagination (31-60).
  1. The moon is up but the light is pale (35-40).
  2. He cannot see but can only guess the flowers far below him (41-50).



3. It would be sweet to die under such conditions (51-60).  
 IV. The deathless character of the Nightingale's song (61-70).  
     1. It was heard in ancient days (64).  
     2. It was heard by Ruth in the fields of Boaz (65-67).  
     3. It was heard on the shores of far-away seas in lands of fairy-love (68-70).  
 V. The imaginative flight is ended; the song dies away; the poet is called back to himself and his unhappy state (71-80).

## ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

## 1

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains  
 One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk;  
 'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot, 5  
 But being too happy in thy happiness,—  
 That thou, light-wingèd Dryad of the trees,  
 In some melodious plot  
 Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,  
 Singest of summer in full-throated ease. 10

## 2

O for a draught of vintage, that hath been  
 Cool'd a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,

---

*As though of hemlock, etc. (line 2)* — Keats had studied medicine and knew the effects of opiates and poisons.

*Lethe-wards* (4) — towards forgetfulness. A river in the lower world was called Lethe. The souls of the departed drank of this river and forgot all they had said and done in the upper world. *Lethe* was also the name of a river in Spain, called the river of Forgetfulness.

*Dryad* (7) — a nymph of the trees. This is a very happy designation for the nightingale — "light-winged Dryad of the trees."

Tasting of Flora and the country-green,  
 Dance, and Provençal song, and sun-burnt mirth!  
 O for a beaker full of the warm South, 15  
 Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,  
 With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,  
 And purple-stained mouth;  
 That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,  
 And with thee fade away into the forest dim; 20

## 3

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget  
 What thou among the leaves hast never known,  
 The weariness, the fever, and the fret  
 Here, where men sit and hear each other groan:  
 Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs, 25  
 Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;  
 Where but to think is to be full of sorrow  
 And leaden-eyed despairs;  
 Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
 Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow. 30

## 4

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,  
 Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,

---

*Flora* (13) — the Roman goddess of flowers and spring.

*Provençal* (14) — relating to Provence in the south of France; liquid and musical tones.

*Hippocrene* (16) — a fountain in Mt. Helicon in Greece sacred to the Muses, said to have been produced by the horse Pegasus striking the ground with his foot; Pegasus being the horse of the Muses upon which poets soar.

*Bacchus* (32) — the god of wine.

*Pards* (32) — panthers; Bacchus was often represented in Greek art as riding on a panther.



But on the viewless wings of Poesy,  
 Though the dull brain perplexes and retards :  
 Already with thee! tender is the night, 35  
 And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,  
 Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;  
 But here there is no light,  
 Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown  
 Through verdurous glooms and winding 40  
 mossy ways.

## 5

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
 Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
 But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet  
 Wherewith the seasonable month endows 45  
 The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;  
 White hawthorne, and the pastoral eglantine;  
 Fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves;  
 And mid-May's eldest child,  
 The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
 The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves. 50

## 6

Darkling I listen; and for many a time  
 I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
 Call'd him soft names in many a musèd rhyme,  
 To take into the air my quiet breath;

---

*Fays* (37)—fairies.

*Seasonable month* (44) — the month in its season.

*eglantine* (46) — a species of rose.

*Darkling* (51) — dimly, indistinctly, vaguely.

Now more than ever seems it rich to die,— 55  
 To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
 While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
 In such an ecstasy!  
 Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—  
 To thy high requiem become a sod. 60

## 7

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!  
 No hungry generations tread thee down;  
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
 In ancient days by emperor and clown:  
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path 65  
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,  
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
 The same that oft-times hath  
 Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn. 70

## 8

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell  
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self!  
 Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well  
 As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.

---

*Alien corn* (67) — wheat and barley in the land of Boaz.

*Elf* (74) — a little sprite or imaginary supernatural being much like a fairy.

Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades 75  
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,  
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep  
In the next valley-glades:  
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?  
Fled is that music: — do I wake or sleep? 80

— John Keats.

---

In connection with this poem read Shelley's *Ode to a Skylark*, Matthew Arnold's *Philomela* and Wordsworth's *To a Cuckoo*.

## Ode on a Grecian Urn



## ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

The main conception upon which Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn* is based is the permanent and unchanging character of the beautiful as expressed in the plastic art as compared with its change and brevity in nature and in human life; but there are four other ideas in the poem of great importance: (1) the superiority of art to poetry; (2) the kinship of art with infinity and eternity; (3) the identity of beauty and truth; (4) the supreme value of the knowledge of this identity.

In the garden, of Holland House, London, there may still be seen a large marble urn or vase which is pointed out as the particular urn which inspired this beautiful poem, but to the present writer it seems more probable that Keats had in mind an urn in the British Museum. The Holland House urn does not fill Keats's description: there are no youths and maidens, no love scenes, no "wild ecstasy," no "fair youth beneath the trees," no lowing heifer lead to the altar. The animals on it are a hog and a bull, there are twelve human figures, and there are preparations for a sacrifice, but not such as Keats describes. The poet may possibly have had this urn in mind, or he may have had in mind some other; it does not matter. The thing the reader needs to do is to see in his imagination the work of art as portrayed by the poet, and get his thought and his feeling. The reader should conceive of an ancient marble vase of Greek art, one side of which is covered with figures in relief representing a sylvan scene, with deities or mortals, men and maidens, a



lover pursuing a maiden who is trying playfully to escape, a youth playing a pipe beneath a tree; it is spring, and the scene is full of verdure and song and gladness and love. On the other side of the vase is an altar covered with green boughs, a heifer decked with garlands is being led by a priest to the sacrifice, and the people from some little town are coming to take part in the rite. The town itself is not represented on the urn, but the poet sees it as clearly as if it were there. Here, then, we have the "material" out of which the poem is made.

In Stanza 1 the poet apostrophizes the urn as the "bride of quietness" and the "foster-child of silence and slow time," implying that it has been speechless except with the voice of art and denoting the long time it has existed from classic to modern days. It is an element in the silence of the centuries. It is a "sylvan historian," because it portrays a sylvan scene and tells in its own way a "flowery tale." The declaration that this old Greek urn can "express a flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme" raises the question of the comparative power of expression possessed by art and by poetry. Mr. Downer (*The Odes of Keats*, Oxford, 1897) says: "The poet perceives the inner meaning of the figures on the urn and recognizes the superiority in some respects of an artistic over a poetic presentation of ideas. What are these respects? Keats says that the urn tells the story 'more sweetly' than poetry. We are here in the metaphysics of art, and the passage is one amongst others that go to show that Keats was not only a seeker after the beautiful, but was ripening for deeper thought, a

more mature and philosophic brain-work." Those who care to follow the subject further should read Matthew Arnold's *Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoon*. After expressing the supremacy of art over poetry, Keats goes on to question the urn as to the legends on its sides. Are these beings men or gods? What maidens are these? The questions are left unanswered: the imagination is free to frame its own reply; but the profitable reader must hear the pipes and timbrels and must see, even as Keats saw, the wild ecstasy.

Stanza 2 begins with the famous line,

"Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter" —

those which are heard in the imagination, in the soul. The melodies heard by a poet like Milton or a musician like Beethoven were doubtless sweeter and richer than those made by any earthly instruments. The relative truth of Keats's statement will depend upon the imaginative and musical powers of the reader. The youth on the urn does not pipe to the ear of sense but to the spirit, and so his song goes on forever. The permanence of art and of the delights it depicts is pointed out: the trees will be for ever green, the maiden for ever fair.

This permanence of art, and its superiority over nature, are further emphasized in Stanza 3. The lover and the maiden, the musician and the boughs of green, are gone centuries ago from real life, but art has made them ours for ever here on the urn. How happy they should all be that they can thus endure, and how fortunate!

In Stanza 4 the poet turns to the other side of the urn and sees the preparations for the religious sacrifice, and in his fancy beholds, also, the little town whose inhabitants have come out "this pious morn" to take part in the ceremony to the gods. And this little town, also true to the demands of art, will silent be for evermore and not a soul will ever return to its streets, for here they are, fixed for all time on the sides of this old urn.

The closing stanza, like the first, apostrophizes the "Attic shape" in its "fair attitude," and, with splendid reach of thought and imagination, exclaims,

"Thou, silent form, doth tease us out of thought  
As doth Eternity — !"

This is perhaps the most spacious and highly poetic conception of the entire poem. To appreciate it one must have felt the mysterious and mighty power of some great work of art and realized its kinship with the things that are eternal. "Our thought can no more compass the ideas and feelings awakened by the urn than it can comprehend eternity itself. The same kind of baffled feeling is produced as when we strive to grasp the infinite."

Finally we have the famous dictum or message of the urn that "beauty is truth, truth beauty," and the life-creed of Keats that this is all that man needs to know on earth. "To see things in their beauty," says Matthew Arnold, "is to see things in their truth, and Keats knew it. 'What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth,' he says in prose; and in immortal verse he has said the same thing:

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

"No, it is not all; but it is true, deeply true, and we have deep need to know it. And with beauty goes not only truth, joy goes with her also; and this, too, Keats saw and said, as in the first line of his *Endymion* it stands written

'A thing of beauty is a joy forever.'

"It is no small thing to have so loved the principle of beauty as to perceive the necessary relation of beauty and truth, and of both with joy. Keats was a great spirit, and counts for far more than many even of his admirers suppose, because this just and high perception made itself clear to him."

### ANALYSIS.

- I. The poet introduces the reader to the old Greek urn and the figures on one side of it. *Lines* 1-10.
  1. The urn is like a bride of quietness (1).
  2. Like a foster-child of silence (2).
  3. It is a historian of sylvan scenes, with legends of deities or mortals (3-8).
  4. The tale is told more sweetly here than it could be in poetry.
  5. A sylvan scene of love and play (8-10).
- II. Suggested or imagined melodies sweeter than those we hear (11-14). The shepherds are urged to play on for the ear of the spirit (12-14).
- III. The permanence of art (15-30).
  1. The youth on this urn will always sing (15-16).
  2. The trees will always be in leaf (16).
  3. The lover will forever be bold and the maiden fair (17-20).
  4. It will always be spring (21-22).
  5. The songs will always be new (22-24).

6. The love here portrayed will always be young (25-27).
7. This love is a higher passion than that in life which brings its regrets (28-30).
- IV. The other side or view of the urn is presented (31-40).
  1. A sacrificial scene — the people (31-34).
  2. The priest, the sacrificial heifer.
  3. The little town (not shown on the urn but imagined) from which the people come to the sacrifice (35-37).
  4. The streets of this town will be empty forever, for here the people are at the sacrifice!
- V. Art like this has a kinship with eternity; to know beauty is to know truth, but they baffle ("tease") us with something of the sense of eternity (41-50).

## ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

## 1

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
 Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
 Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
 A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
 What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape      5  
 Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
 In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
 What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
 What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
 What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?      10

## 2

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
 Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on:

---

*leaf-fringed* (line 5) — doubtless referring to the border round the urn.

*Tempe* (7) — a vale in Thessaly, celebrated by Greek poets on account of its beautiful scenery.

*Arcady* (7) — Arcadia, a mountainous district in the Peloponnesus, taken as the ideal region of rural contentment.



Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,  
 Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:  
 Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave      15  
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
 Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
 Though winning near the goal — yet, do not grieve;  
 She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
 For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!      20

## 3

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed  
 Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;  
 And, happy melodist, unwearied,  
 For ever piping songs for ever new;  
 More happy love! more happy, happy love!      25  
 For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,  
 For ever panting, and for ever young;  
 All breathing human passion far above,  
 That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,  
 A burning forehead and a parching tongue.      30

## 4

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?  
 To what green altar, O mysterious priest,  
 Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,  
 And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?  
 What little town by river or sea shore,      35  
 Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
 Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?

---

*sensual ear* (13) — ear of sense.

*human passion far above* (28) — passion far above human passion.



And little town, thy streets for evermore  
 Will silent be; and not a soul to tell  
 Why thou art desolate, can e'er return. 40

## 5

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! With brede  
 Of marble men and maidens overwrought,  
 With forest branches and the trodden weed;  
 Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought  
 As doth Eternity: Cold Pastoral! 45  
 When old age shall this generation waste,  
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
 "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," — that is all  
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know. 50

— John Keats.

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*Attic shape* (41) — pertaining to Attica (Greece) or to its capital, Athens; Greek.

*fair attitude* (41) — pleasing appearance.

*brede* (41) — braid.

*overwrought* (42) — worked all over.

*Cold pastoral* (45) — a pastoral, or rural poem, in marble.

*friend to man* (48) — because of the lesson it teaches in the next line.

## **The Sermon of St. Francis**



## THE SERMON OF ST. FRANCIS

Longfellow's little poem called *The Sermon of St. Francis* has reference to one of the most famous sermons in the world. This sermon is very brief (perhaps that is one reason why it is so famous), and it may never have been preached at all; it may be only legendary.

St. Francis of Assisi was born at Assisi, Italy, in 1182 and died 1226. He was the founder of the great order of Franciscan Monks. Incidentally I may call attention to the fact that the city of San Francisco was named for him. Saint Francis lived in great simplicity, and he loved birds and beasts as well as men. For two hundred years after his death his sayings and sermons were handed down by word of mouth, but they were finally collected under the title of *The Little Flowers of Saint Francis*. From this collection of legends the story of his famous sermon to the birds as well as the little sermon itself is taken. The legend goes on to say that one day, with his companions, passing on his way he raised his eyes and saw certain trees by the roadside in which were an infinite multitude of birds; at which Saint Francis marveled greatly, and said to his companions, "Await me here in the road, and I will go and preach to my sisters the birds." And he entered the field and began to preach to the birds which were on the ground, and suddenly those which were in the trees came down to him, and as many as there were they all stood quietly until Saint Francis had done preaching, and even then

they did not depart until such time as he had given them his blessing.

Following is the sermon preached by Saint Francis to his little sisters the birds:

"My sisters the birds, ye are greatly beholden unto God your Creator, and always and in every place it is your duty to praise Him, for as much as He hath given you freedom to fly in every place; also hath He given you raiment twofold and threefold almost, because He preserved your seed in the ark of Noah, that your race might never be less. Again ye are beholden to Him for the element of the air, which He has deputed unto you; moreover you sow not, neither do you reap, and God feeds you and gives you the streams and fountains for your thrift. He gives you mountains and valleys for your refuge, tall trees wherein to make your nests, and inasmuch as you neither spin nor weave, God clothes you, you and your children. Hence you should love your Creator greatly, who gives you such great benefits, and therefore beware, my sisters, of the sin of ingratitude, and ever strive to praise God."

Finally, his preaching ended, Saint Francis made them the sign of the cross and gave them leave to depart; and then all the birds rose into the air with wondrous songs, and, according to the cross which Saint Francis had made over them, they divided into four parts, and then one part flew towards the east, and one towards the west, and one towards the south, and one towards the north, and each band went away singing marvelous songs.

#### THE SERMON OF ST. FRANCIS

Up soared the lark into the air,  
A shaft of song, a winged prayer,  
As if a soul, released from pain,  
Were flying back to heaven again.

St. Francis heard; it was to him  
An emblem of the Seraphim;  
The upward motion of the fire,  
The light, the heat, the heart's desire.

Around Assisi's convent gate  
The birds, God's poor who cannot wait,  
From moor and mere and darksome wood  
Came flocking for their dole of food.

"O brother birds," St. Francis said,  
"Ye come to me and ask for bread,  
But not with bread alone to-day  
Shall ye be fed and sent away.

"Ye shall be fed, ye happy birds,  
With manna of celestial words;  
Not mine, though mine they seem to be,  
Not mine, though they be spoken through me.

"O doubly are ye bound to praise  
The great Creator in your lays;  
He giveth you your plumes of down,  
Your crimson hoods, your cloaks of brown.

"He giveth you your wings to fly  
And breathe a purer air on high,  
And careth for you everywhere,  
Who for yourselves so little care!"

With flutter of swift wings and songs  
Together rose the feathered throngs,



And singing scattered far apart;  
Deep peace was in St. Francis' heart.

He knew not if the brotherhood  
His homily had understood;  
He only knew that to one ear  
The meaning of his words was clear.

— H. W. Longfellow.

**Hymn of the Moravian Nuns  
of Bethlehem**



HYMN OF THE MORAVIAN NUNS OF  
BETHLEHEM

When General Lafayette visited the United States in 1824 he was received with great enthusiasm everywhere. *Niles's Register* for October 16, 1824 (quoted in the *North American Review* for April, 1825), in describing his entrance into Baltimore, says:

"As the General passed down the line, a sacred and interesting relic of the revolution was presented to his notice. It was the original standard of the brave and generous General Count Pulaski, whose heroism and devotion to the cause of liberty are conspicuous in the records of the war of independence. The corps of Forsyth's riflemen had solicited and obtained from its possessor, the worthy Colonel Bentalou, the honour of carrying this standard upon the day of the General's arrival in the city; and it was on this occasion displayed upon one of the spears used by the lancers of the legion, entwined with Pulaski's sword belt. It was when this gallant officer received his mortal wound in the attack upon Savannah, on the 19th of October, 1779, and his noble soul was about leaving its earthly tenement, that he bequeathed this belt to his loved and equally brave companion in arms, Colonel (then captain) Bentalou. The legion of Pulaski was raised, organized and disciplined in Baltimore in the spring of 1778. At that period the country generally was destitute, none of the fine or useful arts were cultivated—the whole energies of the people being bent on the war. The army was poorly clad and badly fed—and in the absence of more elegant materials or accomplished artists, the standard of the legion was formed of a piece of crimson silk, and embroidered by the Moravian Nuns of Bethlehem, in Pennsylvania. On one side are the initials U. S. with this motto—*Unita Virtus Fortior*—on the reverse, the all seeing eye, surrounded with thirteen stars, and the motto, *Non alius regit*. It may appear, as it certainly is, a singular circumstance that the standard (first consecrated at Baltimore when a small village), after having waved over the greater part of the old thirteen states, should be returned to the same place, now a large and important city, and there be permanently enshrined."

Longfellow read this account, as copied in the *North*

*American Review*, of which Jared Sparks was then editor, and thereupon wrote the poem, *Hymn of the Moravian Nuns of Bethlehem*.

The banner is now the property of the Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, which came into possession of it in 1844. It is twenty inches square, and is much faded and discolored by time.

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, has the second oldest boarding school for girls in the United States (founded 1741), the oldest being the Ursuline Academy in New Orleans (founded 1727). It was at this Moravian Seminary in Bethlehem that the Pulaski banner was made. Pulaski is said to have ordered it when there on a visit to Lafayette who lay sick at Bethlehem.

The banner did not, of course, become Pulaski's "shroud," as the poem says, or it could not now be in the historical cabinet in Baltimore. Pulaski was mortally wounded in the attack upon Savannah, October 9, 1779. He was conveyed on the U. S. brig *Wasp* to be taken round to Charleston, and died on the voyage. His body was buried at sea.

This is the common account of his death and burial, but Justin Winsor (*Narrative and Critical History of America*, Vol. VI, p. 524) says that at the laying of a corner-stone of a monument to his memory in Savannah, a metallic box supposed to contain his remains was placed within the plinth alongside the corner-stone. Further, an aide-de-camp to Pulaski is quoted by Winsor as saying that the remains were buried under a large tree, about fifty miles from Savannah. Whatever the fact

may be about his burial place, the banner is in Baltimore — and a flag twenty inches square wouldn't make much of a winding-sheet anyhow!

The poem is one of Longfellow's earliest — it was published the year following his graduation from college — and while it has some very obvious faults, it has been widely popular, and deservedly so. If historical accuracy were an essential of poetry, this *Hymn* would be lacking. The description of the chapel is that of a Medieval Roman Catholic church, with its "glimmering tapers," its "cowled head," its "burning censer," its "dim mysterious aisle" and "the nuns' sweet hymn." And then the spear and the lance had gone out of use long before the days of the American Revolution.

It is easy to criticize the poem — just as it is easy to criticize the *Psalm of Life* — but it early got into the school readers and the public has always liked it.

#### HYMN OF THE MORAVIAN NUNS OF BETHLEHEM

At the Consecration of Pulaski's Banner.

When the dying flame of day  
Through the chancel shot its ray,  
Far the glimmering tapers shed  
Faint light on the cowled head;  
And the censer burning swung,  
Where before the altar, hung  
The crimson banner, that with prayer  
Had been consecrated there.



And the nuns' sweet hymn was heard the while,  
Sung low, in the dim, mysterious aisle.

“Take thy banner! May it wave  
Proudly o'er the good and brave;  
When the battle's distant wail  
Breaks the sabbath of our vale,  
When the clarion's music thrills  
To the hearts of these lone hills,  
When the spear in conflict shakes,  
And the strong lance shivering breaks.

“Take thy banner! and, beneath  
The battle-cloud's encircling wreath,  
Guard it, till our homes are free!  
Guard it! God will prosper thee!  
In the dark and trying hour,  
In the breaking forth of power,  
In the rush of steeds and men,  
His right hand will shield thee then.

“Take thy banner! But when night  
Closes round the ghastly fight,  
If the vanquished warrior bow,  
Spare him! By our holy vow,  
By our prayers and many tears,  
By the mercy that endears,  
Spare him! he our love hath shared!  
Spare him! as thou wouldst be spared!

“Take thy banner! and if e’er  
Thou shouldst press the soldier’s bier,  
And the muffled drum should beat  
To the tread of mournful feet,  
Then this crimson flag shall be  
Martial cloak and shroud for thee.”

The warrior took that banner proud,  
And it was his martial cloak and shroud.

— Henry W. Longfellow.



# Ulysses



## ULYSSES

*Ulysses* was the first poem to obtain for Tennyson official recognition, and was one of the poems which drew the attention of England to the young poet. In 1845, when the question arose whether the vacant pension should be given by the Government to Tennyson or to Sheridan Knowles, Lord Houghton got Sir Robert Peel to read *Ulysses*, whereupon the pension was granted to Tennyson. It was written soon after the death of Arthur Hallam, the poet's much beloved friend, and Tennyson says (in the *Memoirs* by his son): "*Ulysses* . . . gave my feeling about the need of going forward, and braving the struggle of life perhaps more simply than anything in *In Memoriam*." "*Ulysses*," says Aubrey De Vere, ". . . shows us what Heroism may become in old age, though sustained by little except the love of knowledge, and the scorn of sloth. Carlyle said that it was *Ulysses* which first convinced him that 'Tennyson was a true poet.' "

Ulysses was king of Ithaca, an island on the west coast of Greece, and was one of the noblest and most respected of the heroes in the war against Troy, which lasted ten years, and which was caused by the abduction of Helen of Sparta by Paris, son of Priam, King of Troy. Helen was the daughter of a king, the wife of a king, and the most beautiful woman in the world. The story of the siege of Troy is told in Homer's *Iliad*. Ulysses (whose Greek name was Odysseus) was full of courage, perseverance, prudence and cunning, and had a large part in



the final fall of Troy. His adventures during the return home from Troy and on his arrival in his native country form the contents of the *Odyssey* of Homer. Ten years of the most stirring adventure were spent in reaching home; and, according to the Homeric account, all of his companions perished, and Ulysses alone reached his native shores. There he found that more than a hundred noble youths of Ithaca and the surrounding islands had appeared as suitors for the hand of his wife Penelope, had persecuted his son Telemachus, and were feasting and rioting upon the substance of the long-absent king. Ulysses destroyed them and took possession of his home and his throne. Here the Homeric story ends, except for a hint that Ulysses should again travel, till he came to a place where men, seeing the oar upon his shoulder, should take it for a winnowing-fan. Then he was to turn again homewards and death, ever so gentle, should come to him outworn in a happy old age, and his people should be happy around him. In the *Inferno* of Dante it is said that Ulysses, after returning to Ithaca, again traveled with that little company by which he was not deserted westwards to a great mountain in the ocean beyond Gibraltar, where the ship foundered and the sea closed over them.

In canto XXVI of the *Inferno*, lines 90-124 (John Aitken Carlyle's translation), Ulysses is made to say:

“When I departed from Circe, who beyond a year detained me there near Gaeta, ere Aeneas thus had named it, neither fondness for my son, nor reverence for my aged father, nor the due love that should have cheered Penelope, could conquer in me the ardour that I had

to gain experience of the world, and of human vice and worth; I put forth on the deep open sea, with but one ship, and with that small company, which had not deserted me. Both the shores I saw as far as Spain, far as Morocco; and saw Sardinia and the other isles which that sea bathes round. I and my companions were old and tardy, when we came to that narrow pass, where Hercules assigned his landmarks to hinder man from venturing farther; on the right hand, I left Seville; on the other, had already left Ceuta. 'O brothers,' I said, 'who through a hundred thousand dangers have reached the West, deny not, to this the brief vigil of your senses that remains, experience of the unpeopled world behind the Sun. Consider your origin: ye were not formed to live like brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge.' With this brief speech I made my companions so eager for the voyage, that I could hardly then have checked them."

Tennyson also represents Ulysses as calling together the remnant of his old comrades and telling them that he has decided to set forth upon new adventures and new discoveries, and to sail beyond the sunset and the baths of all the western stars,—that unknown western ocean which his eager and inquiring spirit longed to explore. The poem is in the Greek manner and characterized by the Greek directness, simplicity and dignity. Many of the phrases are direct from the *Odyssey*, among them these — "The ringing plains of windy Troy," "delight of battle," "the dark, broad seas," "sitting well in order smite the sounding furrows," "the baths of all the western stars," and "cities of men and manners"; and the

sympathetic reader feels that it is a continuation of the great Homeric story — and worthy to be.

The chief conception of the poem is the love of knowledge and the love of experience, with the heroic determination to pursue them to the uttermost; this was Ulysses' quest. He was always roaming with a hungry heart, and he had seen much and experienced much, but the more one knows the more the horizon of knowledge widens; and life piled on life were too little for one to see and experience all. True, he is old and only three or four years of life yet remain, but every hour may bring some new thing, and he is determined to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

The lines are addressed to the men who have spent twenty years with him — ten in the Trojan war and ten in contending with the fates upon the return voyage to Greece.

#### ULYSSES

It little profits that an idle king,  
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,  
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole  
Unequal laws unto a savage race,  
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.      5  
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink  
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd

---

*Matched with an aged wife (line 3)* — Penelope had waited faithfully for twenty years for his return; his leaving her now is not in harmony with modern ideas.

*Unequal laws (4)* — his subjects were not sufficiently civilized to be governed with general laws.

Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those  
 That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when  
 Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades 10  
 Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;  
 For always roaming with a hungry heart  
 Much have I seen and known; cities of men  
 And manners, climates, councils, governments,  
 Myself not least, but honour'd of them all; 15  
 And drunk delight of battle with my peers,  
 Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.  
 I am a part of all that I have met;  
 Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'  
 Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades 20  
 For ever and for ever when I move.  
 How dull it is to pause, to make an end,  
 To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!  
 As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life  
 Were all too little, and of one to me 25  
 Little remains: but every hour is saved  
 From that eternal silence, something more,  
 A bringer of new things; and vile it were  
 For some three suns to store and hoard myself,  
 And this gray spirit yearning in desire 30  
 To follow knowledge like a sinking star,  
 Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.  
 This is my son, mine own Telemachus,

---

*Rainy Hyades* (10) — a group of stars whose appearance was supposed to portend rainy weather.

*Whose margin fades* (20) — as the horizon can never be reached, so the limits of knowledge can never be reached.

*For some three suns* (29) — for the three or four years of life yet remaining.

*This is my son*, etc. (33-34) — Telemachus is better fitted to rule such a people than he is.

To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle —  
 Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil 35  
 This labour, by slow prudence to make mild  
 A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees  
 Subdue them to the useful and the good.  
 Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere  
 Of common duties, decent not to fail 40  
 In offices of tenderness, and pay  
 Meet adoration to my household gods,  
 When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:  
 There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners, 45  
 Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with  
 me —

That ever with a frolic welcome took  
 The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed  
 Free hearts, free foreheads — you and I are old;  
 Old age hath yet his honour and his toil; 50  
 Death closes all: but something ere the end,  
 Some work of noble note, may yet be done,  
 Not unbecoming men that strove with gods.  
 The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:

---

*Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me* (46) — E. C. E. Owen, a former Fellow of New College, Oxford, says: "The long line, with its pairs of monosyllables and repetition of similar syllables, seems to measure out the long years of labors shared together"; and of line 55, *the long day wanes: the slow moon climbs*; etc., he says: "Another line consisting entirely of monosyllables, suggesting the slow movement of time to one in haste to be gone, with so much to be done, and so little time left in which to do it."

*That strove with gods* (53) — The gods are represented as having taken part, on one side or the other, in the siege of Troy, and also as having interfered with or helped Ulysses and his mariners upon their return journey.



The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep 55  
 Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,  
 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.  
 Push off, and sitting well in order smite  
 The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds  
 To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths 60  
 Of all the western stars, until I die.  
 It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:  
 It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,  
 And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.  
 Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho' 65  
 We are not now that strength which in old days  
 Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;  
 One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
 Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
 To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. 70

— Alfred Tennyson.

Read Tennyson's *The Lotus-Eaters* as a contrast to *Ulysses*.

Of lines 62-64, Carlyle said, "These lines do not make me weep, but there is in me what would fill whole Lachrymatories as I read."

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*The baths of all the western stars* (60) — the Greeks believed that the stars revolved round the earth, and in setting sunk into the western sea.

*The happy Isles* (63) — The abode of the blessed after death, at the western extremity of the earth. The Elysian Fields were there.

*Achilles* (64)—the greatest of the Greek warriors at the siege of Troy.





**Ode on the Death of the Duke of  
Wellington**



ODE ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE OF  
WELLINGTON

An ode is a "strain of enthusiastic and exalted lyrical verse, directed to a fixed purpose and dealing progressively with one dignified theme." Its chief purpose often is to honor some great personage, real or fictitious, or to celebrate some important occasion. Tennyson's great ode on the death of the Duke of Wellington, published on the day of the funeral, admirably illustrates this definition. Its purpose was to express the feelings of the empire, for Tennyson was the laureate of the nation and spoke in its name rather than in his own.

The funeral of the Duke of Wellington (1852) was perhaps the most imposing in all English history. A million and a half people watched the procession through Piccadilly, the Strand, Fleet Street, and up Ludgate Hill to St. Paul's Cathedral "in streaming London's central roar." Representatives of every army in Europe and of every regiment in the British service attended. The funeral car, drawn by six horses richly caparisoned, was constructed from guns taken in battles in which Wellington was engaged; the names of his victories were inscribed in gold letters on the car. The great bell of St. Paul's, which is tolled only at the death of members of the royal family or great dignitaries of the church, was tolled as a special honor. Wellington's titles, occupying thirty-seven printed lines in the official register, were read above his coffin — evidences of that "lavish honor" which Tennyson speaks of which the nations of

Europe delighted to bestow upon him. In that long list of titles were: Viscount Wellington and Baron Douro, Marshal-General of the Portugese Army, Count of Vi-meiro, Duke Ciudad Rodrigo, Earl of Wellington, Duke of Verona, Knight of the Garter, Knight of the Golden Fleece, Commander-in-Chief of the Spanish Armies, Duke of Wellington, Prince of Waterloo, Commander of the International Army of Europe, Ambassador to Vienna, Ambassador to Paris, Prime Minister of England, Master-General of the Ordnance, Commander-in-Chief of the English Armies, Ranger of Hyde Park and St. James Park, Field Marshal in the Austrian, Russian, and Prussian Armies, Governor of Plymouth, Constable of the Tower, Lord High Constable of England, First Lord of the Treasury, Chancellor of the University of Oxford, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, and Duke of Vittoria. Was ever mortal man in modern times so honored? "He on whom from both her open hands Lavish Honor showered all her stars."

"Affluent Fortune had" also "emptied all her horn" upon his head. He was first given a pension of £2,000 a year after the battle of Talavera, then a further pension of £2,000 a year when he was created Earl of Wellington, later a grant of £100,000, later a further pension, received £60,000 as Waterloo prize-money, a further grant of £400,000, another of £200,000, was presented by the British nation with an estate costing £263,000 and with a house in London. The nation voted £80,000 for his funeral, and a grateful people subscribed £100,000 to found as a national memorial Wellington College for the education of sons of officers.

It is interesting to remember that this great general who saved England from France, and Europe from Napoleon, was an Irishman, and that he received his military training in a French military school — such is the irony of history. The story of his life from the time of his birth as Arthur Wesley (Wellesley) in County Meath, Ireland, in 1769, through his East Indian and European campaigns, culminating in Waterloo, his career in Parliament, when his opposition to liberal measures brought upon him the hoots of the crowds and personal assaults, to the day when at 83 he was laid by the side of Nelson, the great Admiral, under the dome and the gold cross of St. Paul's and all his titles read, may be found in any encyclopedia. Tennyson refers to some of his famous battles — Assaye, Lisbon, Vittoria, Waterloo.

History illuminates poetry, and poetry is the interpretation of history.

Lord Nelson, who, in *lines* 80 and 81, at the opening of the 6th canto, is made to inquire:

Who is he that cometh, like an honored guest,  
With banner and with music, with soldier and with priest,  
With a nation weeping, and breaking on my rest?

was England's greatest seaman. His great victories were the battle of the Nile, the battle of Copenhagen, and the battle of Trafalgar, where he was killed, 1805. He was buried in St. Paul's and his funeral was the most magnificent that had ever been seen up to that time in England. The great soldier and the great seaman lie side by side; their foes were the same — the French. The great monument in London's central square — Trafalgar Square — is to Nelson's memory.



## ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

The ode opens with a movement which Professor Alden calls "almost lawless," which Morton Luce calls "a few bars of prose rather than verse," and which Dr. Van Dyke thinks is designed to suggest the surging of the crowd through the streets of London, before the entrance into the cathedral for the funeral. Section three represents the funeral march. Luce thinks that the first three short divisions are merely the mutterings, as we may say, of the rising storm of emotion, which reaches its climax in the centre of the poem when Nelson rises from his tomb to welcome this last great Englishman.

Stanza 4 is an amplification of the thought in the last line of Stanza 3. Wellington's qualities as a soldier, statesman, and man are set forth: he was long-enduring, moderate, resolute, whole in himself like King Arthur, clear of ambition or pretense, rich in common sense, sublime in his simplicity. And now he lies like a shattered column, and the victor of Napoleon, the great world-victor, will be seen no more.

In Stanza 5 the body is committed to the grave, rendered back to the mould. The dignified and solemn iambic lines represent with great effectiveness the tolling of the bells of St. Paul's and the thundering of the cannon in the Tower of London. Tennyson's wonderful technical skill is here displayed in the use of the long *o*'s in describing the tolling of the great bell; also in the "boom" and "doom" of the "bellowing" cannon.

At the opening of Stanza 6, the spirit of Nelson in-

quires who this is that comes with banner and with music and with a nation weeping and breaks on his rest in the tomb. With lines solemn and slow, like the muffled music of a funeral march, the answer begins. Then Wellington's great deeds in India and the Peninsula, his victory over Napoleon, "the Ravening Eagle," on that Sabbath day in June, are narrated in stirring trochaic lines with the quick rush of battle. The choral chant of the people in the cathedral closes the stanza with "honor, honor, honor, honor to him, eternal honor to his name."

Tennyson's view of freedom is given in the first half of the next stanza, and Wellington is described as the embodiment of that idea. Tennyson believed in progress through law and order. He was a conservative. He hated "brainless mobs" and called the French Revolution "the red fool-fury of the Seine." Neither he nor Wellington had any sympathy with the rising tide of noisy reformers, but they believed in a "sober freedom" out of which springs "our loyal passion for our temperate kings." To preserve this freedom, the country must heed the advice of him who bade them guard their coasts — the advice of him whose whole life was a rebuke to all self-seekers.

The dominant strain of Stanza 8 is that the path of duty is the way to glory. The great Duke followed this path, and from her open hands lavish Honor showered all her stars upon him and affluent Fortune emptied her horn of plenty. Thus often has it been in England's story that the path of duty was the way to glory. Nelson's last signal at Trafalgar was, "England expects every

man to do his duty," and his dying words were, "Thank God, I have done my duty." Trochaic lines of different lengths and solemn iambics are happily mingled in this stanza to create the impression desired.

In the closing stanza the emotion of the poem dies gradually away in a requiem and farewell. The dirge of the *Dead March* in *Saul* wails in the people's ears; ashes to ashes, dust to dust; God accept him, Christ receive him.

#### ODE ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON

##### 1

Bury the Great Duke

With an empire's lamentation,  
Let us bury the Great Duke

To the noise of the mourning of a mighty nation,  
Mourning when their leaders fall, 5  
Warriors carry the warrior's pall,  
And sorrow darkens hamlet and hall.

##### 2

Where shall we lay the man whom we deplore?  
Here, in streaming London's central roar.  
Let the sound of those he wrought for, 10  
And the feet of those he fought for,  
Echo round his bones for evermore.

---

*Warriors carry the warrior's pall* (line 6) — Eight eminent army officers acted as pall-bearers.

*In streaming London's central roar* (9) — St. Paul's is near the Bank of England and the Exchange, and is in the centre of the traffic of London.

## .3

Lead out the pageant: sad and slow,  
As fits an universal woe,  
Let the long long procession go, 15  
And let the sorrowing crowd about it grow,  
And let the mournful martial music blow;  
The last great Englishman is low.

## 4

Mourn, for to us he seems the last,  
Remembering all his greatness in the Past. 20  
No more in soldier fashion will he greet  
With lifted hand the gazer in the street.  
O friends, our chief state-oracle is mute:  
Mourn for the man of long-enduring blood,  
The statesman-warrior, moderate, resolute, 25  
Whole in himself, a common good.  
Mourn for the man of amplest influence,  
Yet clearest of ambitious crime,  
Our greatest yet with least pretence,  
Great in council and great in war, 30  
Foremost captain of his time,  
Rich in saving common-sense,  
And, as the greatest only are,  
In his simplicity sublime.  
O good gray head which all men knew, 35  
O voice from which their omens all men drew,

---

*O voice from which their omens all men drew* (36) — After the battle of Waterloo, Wellington was the most influential personality in all the world.

O iron nerve to true occasion true,  
 O fall'n at length that tower of strength  
 Which stood four-square to all the winds that blew!  
 Such was he whom we deplore. 40  
 The long self-sacrifice of life is o'er.  
 The great World-victor's victor will be seen no more.

## 5

All is over and done;  
 Render thanks to the Giver,  
 England, for thy son. 45  
 Let the bell be toll'd.  
 Render thanks to the Giver,  
 And render him to the mould.  
 Under the cross of gold  
 That shines over city and river, 50  
 There he shall rest for ever  
 Among the wise and the bold,  
 Let the bell be toll'd:  
 And a reverent people behold  
 The towering car, the sable steeds: 55  
 Bright let it be with its blazon'd deeds,  
 Dark in its funeral fold.  
 Let the bell be toll'd:  
 And a deeper knell in the heart be knoll'd;  
 And the sound of the sorrowing anthem roll'd 60

---

*O iron nerve* (37) — Wellington was known as the "Iron Duke."

*Under the cross of gold* (49) — The cross of St. Paul's.

*Bright let it be, etc.* (56) — Wellington's victories inscribed in gold letters on the funeral car.



Thro' the dome of the golden cross;  
 And the volleying cannon thunder his loss;  
 He knew their voices of old.  
 For many a time in many a clime  
 His captain's-ear has heard them boom 65  
 Bellowing victory, bellowing doom.  
 When he with those deep voices wrought,  
 Guarding realms and kings from shame,  
 With those deep voices our dead captain taught  
 The tyrant, and asserts his claim 70  
 In that dread sound to the great name  
 Which he has worn so pure of blame,  
 In praise and in dispraise the same,  
 A man of well-attemper'd frame.  
 O civic muse, to such a name, 75  
 To such a name for ages long,  
 To such a name,  
 Preserve a broad approach of fame,  
 And ever-echoing avenues of song!

## 6

"Who is he that cometh, like an honour'd guest, 80  
 With banner and with music, with soldier and with  
 priest,  
 With a nation weeping, and breaking on my rest?"—  
 Mighty Seaman, this is he  
 Was great by land as thou by sea.  
 Thine island loves thee well, thou famous man, 85  
 The greatest sailor since our world began.

---

*The volleying cannon (62) — The minute-guns fired at his funeral.*



Now, to the roll of muffled drums,  
 To thee the greatest soldier comes;  
 For this is he  
 Was great by land as thou by sea — 90  
 His foes were thine; he kept us free;  
 O give him welcome, this is he  
 Worthy of our gorgeous rites,  
 And worthy to be laid by thee;  
 For this is England's greatest son, 95  
 He that gain'd a hundred fights,  
 Nor ever lost an English gun;  
 This is he that far away  
 Against the myriads of Assaye  
 Clash'd with his fiery few and won; 100  
 And underneath another sun,  
 Warring on a later day,  
 Round affrighted Lisbon drew  
 The treble works, the vast designs  
 Of his labour'd rampart-lines, 105  
 Where he greatly stood at bay,  
 Whence he issued forth anew,  
 And ever great and greater grew,  
 Beating from the wasted vines  
 Back to France her banded swarms, 110  
 Back to France with countless blows,  
 Till o'er the hills her eagles flew  
 Past the Pyrenean pines,  
 Follow'd up in valley and glen  
 With blare of bugle, clamour of men, 115

---

*wasted vines* (109) — Spanish vineyards — and Spain herself — devastated by the French armies.

Roll of cannon and clash of arms,  
 And England pouring on her foes.  
 Such a war had such a close.  
 Again their ravening eagle rose  
 In anger, wheel'd on Europe-shadowing wings, 120  
 And barking for the thrones of kings;  
 Till one that sought but Duty's iron crown  
 On that loud sabbath shook the spoiler down;  
 A day of onsets of despair!  
 Dash'd on every rocky square 125  
 Their surging charges foam'd themselves away;  
 Last, the Prussian trumpet blew;  
 Thro' the long-tormented air  
 Heaven flash'd a sudden jubilant ray,  
 And down we swept and charged and overthrew. 130  
 So great a soldier taught us there,  
 What long-enduring hearts could do  
 In that world's earthquake, Waterloo!  
 Mighty seaman, tender and true,  
 And pure as he from taint of craven guile, 135  
 O saviour of the silver-coasted isle,  
 O shaker of the Baltic and the Nile,

---

*Again their ravening eagle* (119) — Referring to Napoleon after his escape from Elba.

*Duty's iron crown* (122) — Napoleon was crowned with the Iron Crown of Lombardy.

*That loud Sabbath* (123) — Waterloo was fought on Sunday, June 18, 1815.

*mighty seamen, tender and true* (134) — Before the battle of the Baltic, Nelson wrote a prayer in which he prayed that the British arms might be distinguished not only for victory but for humanity.

*The silver-coasted isle* (136) — The white chalk cliffs of the southern coast of England.

*Shaker of the Baltic* (137) — Lord Nelson.

If aught of things that here befall  
 Touch a spirit among things divine,  
 If love of country move thee there at all, 140  
 Be glad, because his bones are laid by thine!  
 And thro' the centuries let a people's voice  
 In full acclaim,  
 A people's voice,  
 The proof and echo of all human fame, 145  
 A people's voice, when they rejoice  
 At civic revel and pomp and game,  
 Attest their great commander's claim  
 With honour, honour, honour, honour to him,  
 Eternal honour to his name. 150

## 7

A people's voice! we are a people yet.  
 Tho' all men else their nobler dreams forget,  
 Confused by brainless mobs and lawless Powers,  
 Thank Him who isled us here, and roughly set  
 His Briton in blown seas and storming showers, 155  
 We have a voice with which to pay the debt  
 Of boundless love and reverence and regret  
 To those great men who fought, and kept it ours.  
 And keep it ours, O God, from brute control!  
 O Statesmen, guard us, guard the eye, the soul 160  
 Of Europe, keep our noble England whole,  
 And save the one true seed of freedom sown  
 Betwixt a people and their ancient throne,

---

*lawless Powers* (153) — referring to insurrections in Austria and Italy and revolutions in Spain, Poland, and Hungary, following the French Revolution.

That sober freedom out of which there springs  
Our loyal passion for our temperate kings! 165  
For, saving that, ye help to save mankind  
Till public wrong be crumbled into dust,  
And drill the raw world for the march of mind,  
Till crowds at length be sane and crowns be just,  
But wink no more in slothful overtrust. 170  
Remember him who led your hosts;  
He bade you guard the sacred coasts.  
Your cannons moulder on the seaward wall;  
His voice is silent in your council-hall  
For ever; and whatever tempests lour 175  
For ever silent; even if they broke  
In thunder, silent; yet remember all  
He spoke among you, and the Man who spoke;  
Who never sold the truth to serve the hour,  
Nor palter'd with Eternal God for power; 180  
Who let the turbid streams of rumour flow;  
Thro' either babbling world of high and low;  
Whose life was work, whose language rife  
With rugged maxims hewn from life;  
Who never spoke against a foe; 185  
Whose eighty winters freeze with one rebuke  
All great self-seekers trampling on the right:  
Truth-teller was our England's Alfred named;  
Truth-lover was our English Duke;  
Whatever record leap to light 190  
He never shall be shamed.

---

*temperate kings* (165) — a limited monarchy.

*He bade you guard, etc.* (172) — Wellington had recommended, in 1848, the fortification of the Channel Islands and some of the towns on the southern coast of England.

## 8

Lo, the leader in these glorious wars  
 Now to glorious burial slowly borne,  
 Follow'd by the brave of other lands,  
 He, on whom from both her open hands 195  
 Lavish Honour shower'd all her stars,  
 And affluent Fortune emptied all her horn.  
 Yea, let all good things await  
 Him who cares not to be great,  
 But as he saves or serves the state. 200  
 Not once or twice in our rough island-story  
 The path of duty was the way to glory:  
 He that walks it, only thirsting  
 For the right, and learns to deaden  
 Love of self, before his journey closes, 205  
 He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting  
 Into glossy purples, which outredden  
 All voluptuous garden-roses.  
 Not once or twice in our fair island-story,  
 The path of duty was the way to glory: 210  
 He, that ever following her commands,  
 On with toil of heart and knees and hands,  
 Thro' the long gorge to the far light has won  
 His path upward, and prevail'd,  
 Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled 215  
 Are close upon the shining table-lands

---

*The brave of other lands* (194) — Seven foreign armies were represented at the funeral.

*Fortune emptied all her horn* (197) — Fortuna, the Roman goddess, is represented as holding in her hand the "cornucopia" or horn of plenty.

*Not once or twice* (201) — many times.



To which our God Himself is moon and sun.  
Such was he: his work is done.  
But while the races of mankind endure  
Let his great example stand 220  
Colossal, seen of every land,  
And keep the soldier firm, the statesman pure;  
Till in all lands and thro' all human story  
The path of duty be the way to glory.  
And let the land whose hearths he saved from 225  
shame  
For many and many an age proclaim  
At civic revel and pomp and game,  
And when the long-illumined cities flame,  
Their ever-loyal iron leader's fame,  
With honour, honour, honour, honour to him, 230  
Eternal honour to his name.

## 9

Peace, his triumph will be sung  
By some yet unmoulded tongue  
Far on in summers that we shall not see.  
Peace, it is a day of pain 235  
For one about whose patriarchal knee  
Late the little children clung.  
O peace, it is a day of pain  
For one upon whose hand and heart and brain  
Once the weight and fate of Europe hung. 240

---

*The land whose hearths he saved from shame (225) — He prevented the French from invading England.*

*For (236 and 239) — On account of.*



Ours the pain, be his the gain!  
More than is of man's degree  
Must be with us, watching here  
At this, our great solemnity.  
Whom we see not we revere; 245  
We revere, and we refrain  
From talk of battles loud and vain,  
And brawling memories all too free  
For such a wise humility  
As befits a solemn fane: 250  
We revere, and while we hear  
The tides of Music's golden sea  
Setting toward eternity,  
Uplifted high in heart and hope are we,  
Until we doubt not that for one so true 255  
There must be other nobler work to do  
Than when he fought at Waterloo,  
And Victor he must ever be.  
For tho' the Giant Ages heave the hill  
And break the shore, and evermore 260  
Make and break, and work their will;  
Tho' world on world in myriad myriads roll  
Round us, each with different powers,  
And other forms of life than ours,  
What know we greater than the soul? 265  
On God and Godlike men we build our trust.

---

*Brawling memories* (248) — Wellington's opposition to the Reform Bill of 1832 aroused intensely bitter feeling against him among the people. But finally, in order to prevent civil war, he with many other peers absented themselves from the House of Lords and thus permitted the Reform Bill to become law.

Hush, the *Dead March* wails in the people's ears:  
The dark crowd moves, and there are sobs and tears:  
The black earth yawns: the mortal disappears;  
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust; 270  
He is gone who seemed so great.—  
Gone; but nothing can bereave him  
Of the force he made his own  
Being here, and we believe him  
Something far advanced in State, 275  
And that he wears a truer crown  
Than any wreath that man can weave him.  
But speak no more of his renown,  
Lay your earthly fancies down,  
And in the vast cathedral leave him, 280  
God accept him, Christ receive him.

— Alfred Lord Tennyson.

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*The sorrowing anthem* (60) — and the *Dead March* (267) — “The music at St. Paul’s included the ‘Nunc Dimittis’ of Beethoven; a dirge by Mr. Goss, the organist; the ‘Dead March’ in Saul; an anthem from Mendelssohn’s ‘St. Paul’; and other music by Croft and Purcell. When the service ended, the Tower guns began to boom.” E. A. J. Marsh.

Tennyson wrote this ode during the time between the death of Wellington, September 14, 1852, and the day of the Duke’s funeral, November 18.

Wordsworth’s *Ode to Duty* should be read in connection with stanza VIII.



## The Lady of Shalott



## THE LADY OF SHALOTT

Any attempt to explain *The Lady of Shalott* may seem to be a wholly needless enterprise. Perhaps, as Professor MacMeehan says, "the part of wisdom is to listen like a three-year child" to this strange and lovely story of a far-off age. And yet Tennyson himself said it had a meaning deeper than that of a fairy story. In the *Memoirs* by his son occurs this passage:

"The key to this tale of magic symbolism is of deep human significance, and is to be found in the lines:

Or when the moon was overhead  
Came two young lovers lately wed;  
'I am half sick of shadows,' said  
The Lady of Shalott.

"Canon Ainger in his *Tennyson for the Young* quotes the following interpretation given by my father:

" 'The newborn love for something, for some one in the wide world from which she has been so long secluded, takes her out of the region of shadows into that of realities.' "

The poem might be called *The Soul's Awakening*.

Stopford Brooke's comment on the poem is in harmony with Tennyson's own explanation. He says:

"What a secluded maid sees are but pictures, but the hour comes when she says, 'I am half sick of shadows.' To know that the pictures of the mind are shadows is to be wild to seek reality. Then if love comes, hopeless love, all the world of mere phantasy breaks up, and the actual kills. If there be any meaning at all in this piece of gossamer fancy, that is it, and like all Tennyson's meanings, it is as simple as day."



Another symbolic interpretation sometimes given of this poem is that "it shadows forth the relations which poetic genius should sustain to the world for whose spiritual redemption it labors, and the fatal consequence of its being seduced by the world's temptation — the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride life." But those who like this reading of its meaning are welcome to it.

The legend is a very old one, and appears in many versions. Tennyson's poem is said to be based upon an Italian romance, but his later poem of *Lancelot and Elaine*, dealing with the same theme, is based upon Malory's *Mort d'Arthur*, book XVIII, chapters 9-20, in which is told how Elaine, the Fair Maid of Astolat, falls in love with Sir Lancelot, and dies for love of him:

"Now speak we of the fair maiden of Astolat, that made such sorrow day and night, that she never slept, eat, nor drank; and ever she made her complaint unto Sir Launcelot. So when she had thus endured a ten days, that she feeble so that she must needs pass out of this world, then she shrived her clean, and received her Creator. And ever she complained still upon Sir Launcelot. Then her ghostly father bade her leave such thoughts. Then she said, Why should I leave such thoughts? am I not an earthly woman? and all the while the breath is in my body I may complain me, for my belief is I do none offense, though I love an earthly man, and I take God to my record, I never loved none but Sir Launcelot du Lake, nor never shall; and a pure maiden I am for him and for all other. And since it is the sufferance of God that I shall die for the love of so noble a knight, I beseech the High Father of heaven to have mercy upon my soul, and upon mine innumerable pains that I suffered may be allegianced of part of my sins. For sweet Lord Jesu, said the fair maiden, I take thee to record, on thee I was never great offender against thy laws, but that I loved this noble Lord Sir Launcelot out of measure, and of myself, good Lord, I might not withstand the fervent love wherefor I have my death. And then she called her father Sir Bernard, and her brother Sir Pirre, and heartily she prayed her father that her brother might write a letter like as she did endite it; and so her

father granted her. And when the letter was written word by word like as she devised, then she prayed her father that she might be watched until she were dead,—And while my body is hot, let this letter be put in my right hand, and my hand bound fast to the letter until that I be cold, and let me be put in a fair bed, with all the richest clothes that I have about me, and so let my bed, and all my richest clothes, be laid with me in a chariot unto the next place where Thames is, and there let me be put within a barget, and but one man with me, such as you trust to steer me thither, and that my barget be covered with black samite, over and over. Thus, father, I beseech you let it be done. So her father granted it her faithfully all things should be done like as she had devised. Then her father and her brother made great dole, for, when this was done, anon she died. And so when she was dead, the corpse, and the bed, all was led the next way unto Thames and there a man, and the corpse, and all, were put into Thames, and so the man steered the barget unto Westminster, and there he rowed a great while or any espied it. . . .

“Then the king made the barget to be holden fast; and then the king and the queen entered, with certain knights with them. And there he saw the fairest woman lie in a rich bed, covered unto her middle with many rich clothes, and all was of cross of gold, and she lay as though she had smiled. Then the queen espied a letter in her right hand, and told it to the king. Then the king took it, and said, Now I am sure this letter will tell what she was, and why she is come hither. Then the king and the queen went out of the barget, and so commanded a certain man to wait upon the barget. And so when the king was come within his chamber, he called many knights about him, and said that he would wit openly what was written within that letter. Then the king break it, and made a clerk to read it; and this was the intent of the letter:—Most noble knight, Sir Launcelot, now hath death made us two at debate for your love; I was your lover, that men called the fair maiden of Astolat; therefore unto all ladies I make my moan; yet pray for my soul, and bury me at the least, and offer ye my mass-penny. This is my last request. And a clean maiden I died, I take God to witness. Pray for my soul Sir Launcelot as thou art peerless.—This was all the substance in the letter. And when it was read, the king, the queen, and all the knights wept for pity of the doleful complaints. Then was Sir Launcelot sent for. And when he was come, King Arthur made the letter to be read to him; and when Sir Launcelot heard it word by word, he said, My Lord Arthur, wit ye well I am right heavy of the death of this fair damsel. God knoweth I was never causer of her death by my willing, and that I will report me to her own brother; here he is, Sir Levaine. I will not say nay said Sir Launcelot, but that she was

both fair and good, and much I was beholden unto her, but she loved me out of measure. . . .

"Then said the king unto Sir Launcelot, It will be your worship that ye oversee that she be interred worshipfully. Sir, said Sir Launcelot, that shall be done as I can best devise. And so many knights went hither to behold that fair maiden. And so upon the morn she was interred richly, and Sir Launcelot offered her mass-penny, and all the knights of the Table Round that were there at that time offered with Sir Launcelot."

The careful student of *The Lady of Shalott* will discover a number of details to deepen his interest: the magic web, common in both Greek and northern mythology; the broken mirror, to which an evil omen is attached in many parts of the world; the burial-ship, bearing the dead to sea, which was not an uncommon custom among the Vikings; the three paces, a common superstition to ward off misfortune; the castle-ruins and crumbling towers, emblems of decay; the funeral and the wedding — death and love — together, which made the Lady say that she was sick of shadows. Notice, too, that the movement is *down* to Camelot: Fate, the river, and all upon the banks of the river, move downward together. And still they move in the imagination of every reader, though the fairy Lady has passed these hundred years, "God in his mercy lend her grace."

## THE LADY OF SHALOTT

### Part 1

On either side the river lie  
Long fields of barley and of rye,  
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;

And through the field the road runs by  
    To many-tower'd Camelot; 5  
And up and down the people go,  
Gazing where the lilies blow  
Round an island there below,  
    The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver, 10  
Little breezes dusk and shiver  
Thro' the wave that runs for ever  
By the island in the river  
    Flowing down to Camelot.  
Four gray walls, and four gray towers, 15  
Overlook a space of flowers,  
And the silent isle imbowers  
    The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veiled,  
Slide the heavy barges trailed 20  
By slow horses; and unhailed  
The shallop flitteth silken-sailed,  
    Skimming down to Camelot:  
But who hath seen her wave her hand?  
Or at the casement seen her stand? 25  
Or is she known in all the land,  
    The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early  
In among the bearded barley,

---

*Camelot* (5) — The city of Arthur's court, probably the village of Queen Camel, in Somersetshire. Notice that Malory has Winchester instead of Camelot.

Hear a song that echoes cheerly 30  
 From the river winding clearly,  
     Down to towered Camelot:  
 And by the moon the reaper weary,  
 Piling sheaves in uplands airy,  
 Listening, whispers, "'Tis the fairy 35  
     Lady of Shalott."

### Part 2

There she weaves by night and day  
 A magic web with colours gay.  
 She has heard a whisper say  
 A curse is on her if she stay 40  
     To look down to Camelot.  
 She knows not what the curse may be,  
 And so she weaveth steadily,  
 And little other care hath she,  
     The Lady of Shalott. 45

And moving thro' a mirror clear,  
 That hangs before her all the year,  
 Shadows of the world appear:  
 There she sees the highway near,  
     Winding down to Camelot; 50  
 There the river eddy whirls,  
 And there the surly village-churls,

---

*Thro' a mirror clear*, etc. (line 46) — "The mirror, which always stood behind the tapestry, whose face was turned to the glass, so that the worker could see the effect of her stitches without moving from her seat. Every view which the early part of the poem presents is cast upon the mirror" — Arthur Waugh in *Life of Tennyson*.

*shadows of the world* (48) — indistinct reflections of the busy world on the banks of the river.



And the red cloaks of market girls,  
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad, 55  
An abbot on an ambling pad,  
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,  
Or long-haired page in crimson clad,  
Goes by to towered Camelot;  
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue 60  
The knights come riding two and two;  
She hath no loyal knight and true,  
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights  
To weave the mirror's magic sights, 65  
For often thro' the silent nights  
A funeral, with plumes and lights  
And music, went to Camelot;  
Or when the moon was overhead,  
Came two young lovers lately wed: 70  
"I am half sick of shadows," said  
The Lady of Shalott.

### Part 3

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,  
He rode between the barley-sheaves;  
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves, 75  
And flamed upon the brazen greaves



Of bold Sir Lancelot.  
A red-cross knight for ever kneeled  
To a lady in his shield,  
That sparkled on the yellow field, 80  
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,  
Like to some branch of stars we see  
Hung in the golden Galaxy.  
The bridle bells rang merrily 85  
As he rode down to Camelot;  
And from his blazon'd baldric slung  
A mighty silver bugle hung,  
And as he rode his armour rung,  
Beside remote Shallot. 90

All in the blue unclouded weather  
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,  
The helmet and the helmet-feather  
Burn'd like one burning flame together,  
As he rode down to Camelot; 95  
As often thro' the purple night,  
Below the starry clusters bright,  
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,  
Moves over still Shalott.

---

*bold Sir Lancelot* (77) — Lancelot, the chief knight of Arthur's court, was famous for his strength, chivalry, and comeliness. In discussing the attention given in the middle ages to dress and armour, Ruskin says, "Of all the beautiful things which the eyes of men could fall upon, in the world about them, the most beautiful must have been a young knight riding out in the morning sunshine, and in faithful hope." Such a picture, Tennyson draws of Lancelot in part III of this poem.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd; 100  
 On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;  
 From underneath his helmet flow'd  
 His coal-black curls as on he rode,  
     As he rode down to Camelot.  
 From the bank and from the river 105  
 He flash'd into the crystal mirror,  
 "Tirra lirra," by the river  
     Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,  
 She made three paces thro' the room, 110  
 She saw the water-lily bloom,  
 She saw the helmet and the plume,  
     She look'd down to Camelot.  
 Out flew the web and floated wide;  
 The mirror crack'd from side to side; 115  
 "The curse is come upon me," cried  
     The Lady of Shalott.

#### Part 4

In the stormy east-wind straining,  
 The pale yellow woods were waning,

---

*In the stormy east-wind straining* (118) — All readers will notice of course not only the change of seasons from midsummer to autumn but a corresponding change of meter and of "tone-color" in the poem, but Rowe and Webb point out a significant similarity in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, when Adam and Eve had transgressed the command on which their happiness depended. Milton describes nature as mourning over their fall:

Sky loured, and, muttering thunder, some sad drops  
 Wept at completing of the mortal Sin.

Was the Lady of Shalott another Eve who suffered death because she disobeyed the demand not to taste the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge?

The broad stream in his banks complaining, 120  
Heavily the low sky raining  
    Over tower'd Camelot;  
Down she came and found a boat  
Beneath a willow left afloat,  
And round about the prow she wrote 125  
    *The Lady of Shalott.*

And down the river's dim expanse  
Like some bold seer in a trance,  
Seeing all his own mischance —  
With a glassy countenance 130  
    Did she look to Camelot.  
And at the closing of the day  
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;  
The broad stream bore her far away,  
    The Lady of Shalott. 135

Lying, robed in snowy white  
That loosely flew to left and right —  
The leaves upon her falling light —  
Thro' the noises of the night  
    She floated down to Camelot; 140  
And as the boat-head wound along  
The willowy hills and fields among,  
They heard her singing her last song,  
    The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy, 145  
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,  
Till her blood was frozen slowly

And her eyes were darken'd wholly

Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.

For ere she reach'd upon the tide

The first house by the water-side,

Singing in her song she died,

## The Lady of Shalott.

150

Under tower and balcony,

By garden-wall and gallery,

A gleaming shape she floated by,

Dead-pale between the houses high,

## Silent into Camelot.

Out upon the wharfs they came,

Knight and burgher, lord and dame,

And round the prow they read her name,

## The Lady of Shalott.

155

160

Who is this? and what is here?

And in the lighted palace near

Died the sound of royal cheer;

And they crossed themselves for fear,

All the knights at Camelot.

But Lancelot mused a little space:

He said, "She has a lovely face ;

God in his mercy lend her grace,

The Lady of Shalott."

165

170

— Alfred Lord Tennyson.



## **Merlin and the Gleam**





## MERLIN AND THE GLEAM

Tennyson's *Merlin and the Gleam* is an allegory of the poetic career of its author. Moreover, if one wants to find in it the great lesson of faithfulness to high ideals, such a lesson is not far to seek.

*Merlin and the Gleam* was published in Tennyson's last volume, 1889, when he was eighty years of age. In some respects it is as remarkable a piece of work as that other and more familiar old-age poem, *Crossing the Bar*, published in the same volume.

Merlin was the name of an ancient British prophet and magician about whom legends arose as early as the fifth century. He was the great enchanter of the time. He appears in English, French, Italian, and German versions of romances, in both prose and verse. The best known Merlin legends are those in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*.

One of the earliest legends of Merlin was to the effect that this old magician was beguiled by an enchantress called Nimue, who led him as she liked. Now Nimue means "The Gleam."

Tennyson was interested from boyhood in all of the old Arthurian legends, and the story of Merlin particularly had thrown its magic over him — so his son Hallam says. The same authority (in the admirable Macmillan & Company edition of *Tennyson's Works*, London, 1908) says that "for those who cared to know about his literary history he wrote *Merlin and the Gleam*."

Merlin, the old magician and prophet, is Tennyson himself.

"The Gleam signifies," as his son says, "that spirit of poetry which bade him know his power and follow throughout his work a pure and high ideal with a simple and single devotedness and a desire to ennoble the life of the world, and which helped him through doubts and difficulties to 'endure as seeing Him Who is invisible.' " Tennyson says of his poem further: "In the story of Merlin and Nimue I have read that Nimue means 'The Gleam'— which signifies in my poem the higher poetic imagination. Verse 4 is the early imagination; Verse 5 alludes to the Pastorals."

Tennyson all of his life followed the light of this high poetic ideal just as Merlin of old followed Nimue, the Gleam. This is the interpretation of the allegory in the poem.

In Stanza 1 he speaks of himself as the "gray Magician" whom the youth is watching with eyes of wonder and admiration that his great power in the magic of words and thoughts should remain so full and strong at so great an age. He had come to be the modern Merlin.

In Stanza 2 he tells how the old wizard, the ancient Merlin, had found him in boyhood ("at sunrise") and taught him magic, and how the Gleam floated before him and all around him, "moving to melody." Tennyson did in a very rare and very beautiful way, even in his early verses, master the art of melody.

The croak of the raven, in Stanza 3, was the harsh voice of criticism of those who were not sympathetic. "Still the inward voice told him not to be faint-hearted

but to follow his ideal. And by the delight in his own romantic fancy and by the harmonies of Nature, 'the warble of water' and the 'cataract music of falling torrents,' the inspiration of the poet was renewed," says Hallam Tennyson. The poet himself says in one of his notes, already quoted, that Stanza 4 is the early imagination and that Stanza 5 refers to his pastoral poems, published a little later. The latter stanza is a charming description of his poems of country scenes.

The Gleam then led him, Stanza 6, to tell the story of King Arthur and his knights in *The Idylls of the King*, "the city and palace of Arthur the King." The Gleam rested on the forehead of Arthur the blameless because he was the central figure of *The Idylls*.

The next stanza refers to the death of Arthur Hallam, for whom *In Memoriam* was written. The death of Arthur Hallam affected him more than any other experience in his life and plunged him into the very depth of abiding sorrow, and the Gleam "waned to a wintry glimmer" and drew to the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death. But even this shadow changed, slowly brightening, clothed with the Gleam. Hallam Tennyson points out that his father, in Stanza 7, unites the two Arthurs — the Arthur of the *Idylls* and Arthur Hallam, "the man he held as half divine."

Then we have the two splendid closing stanzas, in which the Gleam gets broader and brighter for the poet in his eighty years, and he, though old and weary, is eager to follow. And wherever the Gleam passed, whether over hamlet or city or church or grave, the Gleam would make it break into bloom! Such are the

magic gifts of the imagination. And so to the edge of life he comes, to the land's last limit, and there on the borders of the boundless ocean, on the hither verge of Heaven, hovers the Gleam — the Light which he has followed from childhood.

And this Gleam is not an earthly beacon, not of the sunlight, not of the moonlight, not of the starlight. The closing lines of the poem, even as the opening lines, are addressed to the young mariner of life:

Call your companions,  
Launch your vessel,  
And crowd your canvas,  
And, ere it vanishes  
Over the margin,  
After it, follow it,  
Follow The Gleam.

#### ANALYSIS.

- I. The aged poet, speaking of himself as Merlin or the Magician, addresses a young man. *Lines* 1-10.
- II. In his childhood the poet followed the poetic light (11-23).
- III. But the Raven of Criticism croaked and the poet was silent for a while (24-34).
- IV. The poetry of his young manhood (35-48).
- V. His pastoral poems — the *English Idyls* (49-62).
- VI. *The Idylls of the King* (63-75).
- VII. *In Memoriam* (76-95).
- VIII. Following the Gleam in his old age (96-120).
- IX. The young man is urged to follow his ideal before it vanishes among the cares of life (121-132).

## MERLIN AND THE GLEAM.

## 1

O young Mariner,  
You from the haven  
Under the sea-cliff,  
You that are watching  
The gray Magician 5  
With eyes of wonder,  
I am Merlin,  
And I am dying,  
I am Merlin  
Who follow The Gleam. 10

## 2

Mighty the Wizard  
Who found me at sunrise  
Sleeping, and woke me  
And learned me Magic!  
Great the Master, 15  
And sweet the Magic,  
When over the valley,  
In early summers,  
Over the Mountain,  
On human faces, 20  
And all around me,

---

*learned me Magic!* (line 14) — an archaic use of "learned" for taught. Shakespeare, Spenser and other old writers use it in that sense.



Moving to melody,  
Floated the Gleam.

## 3

Once at the croak of a Raven who crost it  
A barbarous people, 25  
Blind to the magic,  
And deaf to the melody,  
Snarl'd at and cursed me.  
A demon vext me,  
The light retreated, 30  
The landskip darken'd,  
The melody deaden'd,  
The master whisper'd  
"Follow The Gleam."

## 4

Then to the melody, 35  
Over a wilderness  
Gliding, and glancing at  
Elf of the woodland,  
Gnome of the cavern,  
Griffen and Giant, 40  
And dancing of Fairies  
In desolate hollows,  
And wraiths of the mountain,  
And rolling of dragons  
By warble of water, 45  
Or cataract music  
Of falling torrents,  
Flitted The Gleam.

## 5

Down from the mountain  
And over the level, 50  
And streaming and shining on  
Silent river,  
Silvery willow,  
Pasture and plowland,  
Horses and oxen, 55  
Innocent maidens,  
Garrulous children,  
Homestead and harvest,  
Reaper and gleaner,  
And rough ruddy faces 60  
Of lowly labour,  
Slided The Gleam. —

## 6

Then, with a melody  
Stronger and statelier,  
Led me at length 65  
To the city and palace  
Of Arthur the king;  
Touch'd at the golden  
Cross of the churches,  
Flash'd on the Tournament, 70  
Flicker'd and bicker'd  
From helmet to helmet,  
And last on the forehead  
Of Arthur the blameless  
Rested The Gleam. 75

## 7

Clouds and darkness Closed upon Camelot; Arthur had vanish'd I knew not whither, The king who loved me, And cannot die; For out of the darkness Silent and slowly The Gleam, that had waned to a wintry glimmer	80
On icy fallow And faded forest, Drew to the valley Named of the shadow, And slowly brightening Out of the glimmer, And slowly moving again to melody Yearningly tender, Fell on the shadow, No longer a shadow, But clothed with The Gleam.	85      90  95

## 8

And broader and brighter  
The Gleam flying onward,  
Wed to the melody,  
Sang thro' the world;

---

*And cannot die;* (81) — the old legends said that King Arthur could not die, but would return to Camelot.

And slower and fainter,	100
Old and weary,	
But eager to follow,	
I saw, whenever	
In passing it glanced upon	
Hamlet or city,	105
That under the Crosses	
The dead man's garden,	
The mortal hillock,	
Would break into blossom;	
And so to the land's	110
Last limit I came —	
And can no longer,	
But die rejoicing,	
For thro' the Magic	
Of Him the Mighty,	115
Who taught me in childhood,	
There on the border	
Of boundless Ocean,	
And all but in Heaven	
Hovers The Gleam.	120

## 9

Not of the sunlight,	
Not of the moonlight,	
Not of the starlight!	
O young Mariner,	
Down to the haven,	125
Call your companions,	

---

*The dead man's garden, (107) — a cemetery.*

Launch your vessel,  
And crowd your canvas,  
And, ere it vanishes  
Over the margin,  
After it, follow it,  
Follow The Gleam.

130

— Alfred Lord Tennyson.

**Andrea Del Sarto**





## ANDREA DEL SARTO

In the Pitti Gallery in Florence there is a portrait of the artist Andrea del Sarto and his wife, Lucrezia, painted by the artist himself. The two are seated at the window opening toward the picturesque old town of Fiesole, three miles to the west. The artist's right arm rests upon the shoulder of his wife and his left hand is making a mild appealing gesture in the attitude of one talking. He seems to be speaking half to her and half to himself. Lucrezia seems not to be listening to anything he says: her thoughts are elsewhere. She is a beautiful woman physically, but wholly wanting in intellectual or spiritual expression; there is no sign of love or conscience. Lucrezia has red-brown hair, there is a gold chain about her neck, and she holds a letter in her hand. Andrea's face is refined, melancholy, weak, helpless, weary. A gray tone pervades the picture, and one can not look upon it without feeling that here is the story of a soul's tragedy.

John Browning lived across the street from this picture, and the picture, together with the story of Andrea's life, as told by George Vasari, in his *Lives of the Most Eminent Italian Painters*, furnished him with the material for his poem *Andrea del Sarto*. The poem is, in fact, a commentary upon the picture. John Kenyon, Mrs. Browning's cousin, had asked Browning to get for him a copy of the picture. Not being able to find one, Browning wrote for him this poem instead.

Andrea del Sarto (1486-1531) lived at Florence during

the great time of Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci. He was known as "the faultless painter," because his drawing and his coloring were so perfect. But though he was a faultless painter he was a weak character. He fell in love with Lucrezia, the beautiful but not very reputable wife of a cap-maker, and after her husband's death married her. She delighted in trapping the hearts of other men besides Andrea, but although he knew her faults he had not the power to release himself from her. She had no appreciation of his art or interest in it. Under her spell he neglected his work and ceased to provide for his needy parents. But certain pictures of his had attracted the attention of King Francis of France and he was invited to go and paint at the French court. A letter from Lucrezia called him back to Florence. The King gave him leave to go, Andrea taking an oath on the gospels to return within a few months. The King commissioned him to buy certain works of art in Florence and entrusted him with the money to pay for them. Andrea did not return to France, nor did he purchase the works of art for the King, but instead he used the money in building a house for Lucrezia — the one at whose window they are sitting in the picture. "The prayers and tears of his wife had more power than his own necessities, or the faith which he had pledged to the king," says Vasari, who was a pupil of Andrea. Lucrezia survived her husband forty years. One day, a year before her death, when an artist was copying one of her husband's pictures in the court of one of the churches, an old woman of eighty stopped to speak to him on her way to mass, and pointing to the

figure of the handsome young matron in the picture told him that this was her portrait and that she was Lucrezia, the widow of the great painter.

The criticism of Andrea del Sarto as a painter, by John Addington Symonds (*The Renaissance in Italy — The Fine Arts*, p. 497), has direct bearing upon the meaning of Browning's poem. He says:

"The Italians called him 'il pittore senza errore,' or the faultless painter. What they meant by this must have been that in technical requirements of art . . . he was above criticism. As a colorist he went further and produced more beautiful effects than any Florentine before him. . . . What he lacked was the most precious gift — inspiration, depth of emotion, energy of thought. . . . The story that his wife, a worthless woman, sat for his Madonnas, and the legends of his working for money to meet pressing needs, seemed justified by numbers of his paintings, faulty in their faultlessness and want of spirit. Still after making these deductions, we must allow that Andrea del Sarto not unworthily represents the golden age of Florence."

Now let us read the poem. A careful study of it will be profitable for at least three reasons: It is an excellent example of Browning's method of dramatic monologue in revealing a human soul by showing his readers a cross-section of that soul at a crucial moment; it shows us his attitude toward the secret of great art; it shows us, indirectly, his interpretation of life. For with Browning, art and the art of life have the same word at the heart of them, and that word is "aspiration" — not fulfillment, but infinite and unattained aspiration, and the struggle that accompanies it.

"Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,  
Or what's a heaven for?"

"'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven —  
The better! What's come to perfection perishes.  
Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven."

practise

## ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

*Scene* — Andrea del Sarto and his wife, Lucrezia, are seated at the window of the studio opening over Florence toward Fiesole. It is an evening in autumn. Andrea is speaking, and the poem is a monologue throughout.

*Mood* — "A common grayness silvers everything," and this is the prevailing tone of the poem. It is autumn in the picture and autumn in the speaker's heart.

*Lucrezia's Character* — The wife's personality is clearly presented in such lines as 4, 23-32, 38, 54-56, 74-75, 117-132, 199-200, 219, 222, and 241-243.

Andrea entreats Lucrezia to sit with him, for he is weary, discouraged. He tells her if she will do so he will to-morrow paint the picture to supply her with the money which she is demanding of him for one of her friends. In her smile he sees the picture he is to paint — its tone, sentiment, atmosphere, and harmony (*lines 1-50*).

He tells with what ease and perfection he does his work — in this respect how superior he is to his associates. Of course she does not understand or care to understand about his art, but she can hear when other people praise it (*50-77*).

But he recognizes their superiority over him because there burns a truer light of God in them, because they reach a heaven that's shut to him. He can paint all he sees, but they show in their less finished work that their vision is higher than his. Their reach exceeds their grasp; his does not. If he had their vision, combined



with his own skill, he might have over-topped the world (78-103) .

He illustrates this by pointing out in the room a picture by Raphael ("the Urbanite"), faulty in drawing but with its soul right. Had you but urged me onward, brought me soul and inspiration as well as beauty, he says to Lucrezia, I might have risen side by side with Raphael and Michael Angelo (104-131).

But perhaps, after all, he says, it is God's will. Then he half blames himself — perhaps he did not have the will to rise. Neither Raphael nor Angelo had a wife to urge him on (132-144).

Then he refers to the time when he painted for the King of France — that glorious time, when under the smile of the King and the Court he was able to "leave the ground" and put on for a brief time the glory that abides constantly with Raphael. Those were his kingly days, but Lucrezia called him home. He lost his opportunity, but he is satisfied; men will understand (145-182).

He recalls what Angelo said about him once to Raphael a long time ago: praise which he has treasured in his heart, but which Lucrezia does not at all appreciate, for she immediately forgets who it was that had praised her husband. Then he refers again to Raphael's defective drawing, and proceeds to correct it, but instantly erases his correction (183-200).

The clock strikes: they have been sitting an hour. The autumn evening deepens. He begs for more love and asks her to go from the studio into the house — "the melancholy little house they built with King Francis'



money to be so gay with." But she is restless: her "cousin" waits outside for her. Andrea says he will sit the gray remainder of the evening out and muse how, if he were back in France, he would paint one more picture worthy of Michael Angelo's praise. Let the "cousin" wait until to-morrow—he shall have the money to pay his gambling debt ("the thirteen scudi for the ruff") (201-243).

The monologue closes in a mood of despair. The artist resigns himself to his state and excuses his treatment of his parents—one can't have everything or be everything. But he craves one chance more, the chance to paint one of the four walls of the New Jerusalem: one for Leonardo, one for Raphael, one for Michael Angelo, and the other for him. But he recognizes that it is impossible, for "there's still Lucrezia," and for her sake he will give up the chance. They may paint the walls of the New Jerusalem, he never can. He accepts fate now, but fate which his will is responsible for (244-267).

## ANDREA DEL SARTO

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER")

But do not let us quarrel any more,  
 No, my Lucrezia! bear with me for once:  
 Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.  
 You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?  
 I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,      5  
 Treat his own subject after his own way,  
 Fix his own time, accept too his own price,

And shut the money into this small hand  
When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?  
Oh, I'll content him, — but to-morrow, Love! 10  
I often am much wearier than you think,  
This evening more than usual: and it seems  
As if — forgive now — should you let me sit  
Here by the window, with your hand in mine,  
And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole, 15  
Both of one mind, as married people use,  
Quietly, quietly the evening through,  
I might get up to-morrow to my work  
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.  
To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this! 20  
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,  
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.  
Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve  
For each of the five pictures we require:  
It saves a model. So! keep looking so — 25  
My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds!  
— How could you ever prick those perfect ears,  
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet —  
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,  
Which everybody looks on and calls his, 30  
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,  
While she looks — no one's: very dear, no less.  
You smile? why, there's my picture ready made,  
There's what we painters call our harmony!  
A common grayness silvers everything, — 35  
All in a twilight, you and I alike

---

*It saves a model* (25) — Lucrezia's face appears in many of her husband's most famous pictures.

— You, at the point of your first pride in me  
(That's gone, you know) — but I, at every point;  
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down  
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole. 40  
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;  
That length of convent-wall across the way  
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;  
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease  
And autumn grows, autumn in everything. — 45  
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape,  
As if I saw alike my work and self  
And all that I was born to be and do,  
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.  
How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead; 50  
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!  
I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!  
This chamber for example — turn your head —  
All that's behind us! You don't understand  
Nor care to understand about my art, 55  
But you can hear at least when people speak:  
And that cartoon, the second from the door  
— It is the thing, Love! so such things should be —  
Behold Madonna! — I am bold to say.  
I can do with my pencil what I know, 60  
What I see, what at bottom of my heart  
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep —  
Do easily, too — when I say, perfectly,  
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge,  
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week; 65  
And just as much they used to say in France.  
At any rate 't is easy, all of it!

No sketches first, no studies, that's long past:  
 I do what many dream of, all their lives,  
 — Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do, 70  
 And fail in doing. I could count twenty such  
 On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,  
 Who strive — you don't know how the others strive  
 To paint a little thing like that you smeared  
 Carelessly passing with your robes afloat, — 75  
 Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,  
 (I know his name, no matter) — so much less!  
 Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.  
 There burns a truer light of God in them,  
 In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up 80  
     brain, —  
 Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt  
 This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.  
 Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,  
 Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,  
 Enter and take their place there sure enough, 85  
 Tho' they come back and cannot tell the world.  
 My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.  
 The sudden blood of these men! at a word —  
 Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.  
 I, painting for myself and to myself, 90  
 Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame  
 Or their praise either. Somebody remarks  
 Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,  
 His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,  
 Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that? 95

*Someone says (76) — Michael Angelo.*

*Morello (93) — A mountain north of Florence.*

Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?  
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,  
Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-gray,  
Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!  
I know both what I want and what might gain, 100  
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh  
"Had I been two, another and myself,  
Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.  
Yonder's a work done, of that famous youth  
The Urbinate who died five years ago. 105  
( 'T is copied, George Vasari sent it me.)  
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,  
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,  
Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,  
Above and thro' his art — for it gives way; 110  
That arm is wrongly put — and there again —  
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,  
Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,  
He means right — that, a child may understand.  
Still, what an arm! and I could alter it: 115  
But all the play, the insight and the stretch —  
Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?  
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,  
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!  
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think — 120  
More than I merit, yes, by many times.  
But had you — oh, with the same perfect brow,  
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,  
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird

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*The Urbinate (105) — Raphael, born at Urbino.*



The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare — 125  
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!  
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged  
"God and the glory! never care for gain,  
The present by the future, what is that?  
Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo! 130  
Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!"  
I might have done it for you. So it seems:  
Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.  
Beside, incentives come from the soul's self;  
The rest avail not. Why do I need you? 135  
What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?  
In this world, who can do a thing, will not;  
And who would do it, can not, I perceive:  
Yet the will's somewhat — somewhat, too, the power  
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end, 140  
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.  
'T is safer for me, if the award be strict,  
That I am something underrated here,  
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.  
I dare not, do you know, leave home all day, 145  
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.  
The best is when they pass and look aside;  
But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.  
Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,  
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau! 150  
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,  
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,

---

*Agnolo* (130) — Michael Angelo.

*For fear of chancing on the Paris lords* (146) — who knew of his defalcation towards their King.



In that humane great monarch's golden look, —  
 One finger in his beard or twisted curl  
 Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile, 155  
 One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,  
 The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,  
 I painting proudly with his breath on me,  
 All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,  
 Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls 160  
 Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts, —  
 And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,  
 This in the background, waiting on my work,  
 To crown the issue with a last reward!  
 A good time, was it not, my kingly days? 165  
 And had you not grown restless . . . but I know —  
 'T is done and past; 't was right, my instinct said;  
 Too live the life grew, golden and not gray:  
 And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt  
 Out of the grange whose four walls make his world. 170  
 How could it end in any other way?  
 You called me, and I came home to your heart.  
 The triumph was — to reach and stay there; since  
 I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?  
 Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold, 175  
 You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!  
 "Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;  
 The Roman's is the better when you pray,  
 But still the other's Virgin was his wife — "  
 Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge 180  
 Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows

---

*This face beyond* (162) — Lucrezia's.  
*the Roman's* (179) — Michael Angelo.

My better fortune, I resolve to think.  
For do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,  
Said one day Agnolo, his very self,  
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . . 185  
(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts  
Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,  
Too lifted up in heart because of it)  
“Friend, there’s a certain sorry little scrub  
Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how, 190  
Who, were he set to plan and execute  
As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,  
Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!”  
To Rafael’s! — And indeed the arm is wrong.  
I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see, 195  
Give the chalk here — quick, thus the line should go!  
Ay, but the soul! he’s Rafael! rub it out!  
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,  
(What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?  
Do you forget already words like those?) 200  
If really there was such a chance so lost, —  
Is, whether you’re — not grateful — but more pleased.  
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!  
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?  
If you would sit thus by me every night 205  
I should work better, do you comprehend?  
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.  
See, it is settled dusk now; there’s a star;  
Morello’s gone, the watch-lights show the wall,  
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by. 210  
Come from the window, love, — come in, at last,  
Inside the melancholy little house

We built to be so gay with. God is just.  
King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights  
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out, 215  
The walls become illumined, brick from brick  
Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,  
That gold of his I did cement them with!  
Let us but love each other. Must you go?  
That Cousin here again? he waits outside? 220  
Must see you — you, and not with me? Those loans?  
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?  
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?  
While hand and eye and something of a heart  
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth? 225  
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit  
The gray remainder of the evening out,  
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly  
How I could paint, were I but back in France,  
One picture, just one more — the Virgin's face, 230  
Not yours this time! I want you at my side  
To hear them — that is, Michel Agnolo —  
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.  
Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.  
I take the subjects for his corridor, 235  
Finish the portrait out of hand — there, there,  
And throw him in another thing or two  
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough  
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,  
What's better, and what's all I care about, 240  
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!

---

*Scudi for the ruff* (241) — "scudi," Italian coins; "ruff," a game of cards.

Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,  
The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.  
I regret little, I would change still less. 245  
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?  
The very wrong to Francis! — it is true  
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,  
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.  
My father and my mother died of want. 250  
Well, had I riches of my own? you see  
How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.  
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:  
And I have laboured somewhat in my time  
And not been paid profusely. Some good son 255  
Paint my two hundred pictures — let him try!  
No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,  
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.  
This must suffice me here. What would one have?  
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance — 260  
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,  
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,  
For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me

---

*four great walls in the New Jerusalem* (261) — Revelations XXI; 15-18: And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city leeth four square, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

*Leonard* (263) — Leonardo da Vinci.

To cover — the three first without a wife,  
While I have mine! So — still they overcome 265  
Because there's still Lucrezia, — as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

— Robert Browning.

## **The Lost Leader**





## THE LOST LEADER

In 1845 Robert Browning published *The Lost Leader*, a criticism of Wordsworth, or perhaps one ought to say that it is a criticism of all leaders who desert the cause of the people, Wordsworth being taken by Browning as a type of all such. *The Lost Leader* is the confident assurance of a young man (Browning was then thirty-three and Wordsworth was seventy-five and had been made Poet Laureate two years before). The poem attracted attention as soon as it appeared, not only because of its attack upon the greatest of living English poets, but because of its splendid qualities as a marching cry for social progress; and it continues to be one of the best known of Browning's poems.

That Browning had the great Lake poet in mind is clear; not only from his own admission later, but from many other circumstances. William Sharp, in his *Life of Browning*, says: "It is best as well as right that Wordsworth should not be more than nominally identified with *The Lost Leader*," but G. K. Chesterton (*Life of Browning*) calls it a "perfectly normal and old-fashioned indignation." Browning himself, in answer to an inquiry, softened the matter over in this fashion:

"I did in my hasty youth presume to use the great and venerable personality of Wordsworth as a sort of painter's model; one from which this or the other particular feature may be selected and turned to account; had I intended more, above all, such a boldness as portraying the entire man, I should not have talked about

'handfuls of silver and bits of ribbon.' These never influenced the change of policy in the great poet; whose defection, nevertheless, accompanied as it was by a regular face-about of his special party, was to my juvenile apprehension and even mature consideration an event to deplore. But just as in the tapestry on my wall I can recognize figures which have *struck out* a fancy, on occasion, that though truly enough thus derived, yet would be preposterous as a copy, so, though I dare not deny the original of my little poem, I altogether refuse to have it considered as the 'vera effigies' of such a moral and intellectual superiority."

Browning and Wordsworth were acquainted with each other and the younger poet often spoke of the older with respect and praise, but all through the voluminous correspondence of Browning and Elizabeth Barrett there are references to Wordsworth which show that Browning never fully appreciated either him or his poetry.

And then, there were good reasons why Browning or any other Liberal should feel that Wordsworth had deserted the cause. As a young man, just out of the University, Wordsworth had been in enthusiastic sympathy with the French Revolution and the cause of liberty and equality. He visited France and thought of taking part in the great struggle, but was called back to England. He spoke of France as

Standing on the top of golden hours

and in 1850 he said:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive  
But to be young was very Heaven.

In a letter to the Bishop of Landoff he advocated universal suffrage, defended the insight of the masses, pleaded for extended education, and advocated the election by the people of their chief ruler. This is surely wide-open democracy. Yet so changed had his opinions become that in 1836 he could write: "It is pride and presumption, and not real love of liberty which has made the French and the Americans so enamoured of what they call equality." He had become, in fact, a pronounced Conservative. He opposed the schemes for the spread of education, Catholic Emancipation, the Reform Bill, the New Poor Law — indeed, the whole great movement about 1830 for the rights of the common people. The process through which this change came about is perfectly clear, but can not be discussed here. That Wordsworth was absolutely sincere, there can be no sort of doubt. He was not alone in changing his views — Southey, Charles Kingsley, and others were with him. And this fact must be remembered, that Wordsworth remains for all time the supreme poet of the joys and sorrows of the shepherds and dalesmen and humble folk of the hills and dales of England.

It is interesting to recall that Shelley, a Liberalist of the most radical type, addressed a sonnet to Wordsworth in 1815 in which occur these lines:

"Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine  
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar:  
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood  
Above the blind and battling multitude:  
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave  
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,—  
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,  
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be."

## THE LOST LEADER

Just for a handful of silver he left us,  
 Just for a riband to stick in his coat —  
 Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,  
 Lost all the others she lets us devote;  
 They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver;      5  
 So much was theirs who so little allowed:  
 How all our copper had gone for his service!  
 Rags — were they purple, his heart had been proud!  
 We that had loved him so, followed him, honored him,  
 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,      10  
 Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,  
 Made him our pattern to live and to die!  
 Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,  
 Burns, Shelley, were with us,— they watch from their  
 graves!  
 He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,      15  
 — He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!  
 We shall march prospering, — not through his presence;  
 Songs may inspirit us,— not from his lyre;  
 Deeds will be done,— while he boasts his quiescence,  
 Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:      20  
 Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,  
 One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,

---

The first two lines doubtless refer to the pension of £300 granted to Wordsworth in 1842 and to the Laureateship bestowed upon him in 1843. The fourth line means that by accepting these official honors from King George, Wordsworth had lost the esteem of those who had been his Liberal followers.

Lines 10 and 11 are a fine and famous description of Wordsworth.

One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,  
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!  
Life's night begins: let him never come back to us! 25  
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain;  
Forced praise on our part — the glimmer of twilight,  
Never glad, confident morning again!  
Best fight on well, for we taught him — strike gallantly,  
Menace our heart ere we master his own; 30  
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,  
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

— Robert Browning.

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*The new knowledge (line 31) — "Knowledge of the inevitableness of the people's progress" — (Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke).*





## **Philomela**



## PHILOMELA

Few of Matthew Arnold's poems possess the exquisite grace and charm of *Philomela*. It succeeds too in catching and expressing something of the indefinable "deep-sunken old-world pain" of its theme.

Philomela is another name for the nightingale, the finest of European song-birds, whose entrancing song is heard in England chiefly in still nights of May and June. To understand the poem one must know the ancient Greek myth of Philomela, which is told with many variations by different writers, ancient and modern.

Pandion, King of Attica, had two daughters, Prokne (or Procne) and Philomela. For assistance in a war with the King of Thebes, rendered him by Tereus, King of Thrace, Pandion gave Prokne to Tereus to be his wife, and they went back to Thrace. After some time Prokne wanted her sister Philomela to visit her, and Tereus went to Athens to get her and accompany her to Thrace. On the way he mistreated her and to keep her from telling her sister, his wife, he cut out her tongue and shut her up in a house in the woods, and told his wife that Philomela was dead. Philomela, however, contrived to weave the story of her treatment into a web or piece of tapestry and send it to her sister. Prokne succeeded in releasing Philomela, and then to punish Tereus she had served up to him in a dish to eat the flesh of his own son Itylos (or Itys). Discovering what she had done, Tereus pursued the two sisters with a sword. To aid them in their escape from him, Prokne was changed by the gods

into a swallow and Philomela into a nightingale. "The one of them for the woods, the other takes her place beneath the roofs of houses. Nor even yet have the marks of murder withdrawn from her breast, and her feathers are still stained with blood."

This is the story as told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book VI, lines 412 to 676. Some writers reverse the legend and say that Philomela was changed into a swallow, and Prokne into a nightingale. Another version is this:

Tereus, some time after his marriage to Prokne, tired of her, and pretending to her sister Philomela that Prokne was dead, he married Philomela. To prevent Prokne from revealing the truth he tore out her tongue and placed her in a cage. But Prokne wove a statement of the facts into a piece of tapestry or web and sent it to her sister. The two sisters then, in order to execute a terrible revenge upon Tereus, killed his young son, Itylos, and placed the flesh in a dish before him. Tereus drew his sword and pursued the sisters till all three were changed by the gods into birds: he into a lapwing, Prokne into a swallow, and Philomela into a nightingale. Itys or Itylos was changed into a pheasant.

The legend is connected with the Greek city of Daulis, the "lone Daulis" in the "high Cephissian vale" of Arnold's poem.

#### PHILOMELA

Hark! Ah the Nightingale!  
The tawny-throated!  
Hark! from the moonlit cedar what a burst!

What triumph! hark — what pain!  
O Wanderer from a Grecian shore,  
Still, after many years, in distant lands,  
Still nourishing in thy bewilder'd brain  
That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old-world pain —

Say, will it never heal?

And can this fragrant lawn  
With its cool trees, and night,  
And the sweet, tranquil Thames,  
And moonshine and the dew,  
To thy rack'd heart and brain

Afford no balm?

Dost thou tonight behold

Here, through the moonlight on this English grass,  
The unfriendly palace in the Thracian wild?

Dost thou again peruse

With hot cheeks and sear'd eyes  
The too clear web, and thy dumb Sister's shame?

Dost thou once more assay

Thy flight and feel come over thee,  
Poor Fugitive, the feathery change  
Once more, and once more seem to make resound  
With love and hate, triumph and agony,  
Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale?

Listen, Eugenia —

How thick the bursts come crowding through the leaves!

Again — thou hearest!

Eternal passion!

Eternal pain!

— Matthew Arnold.

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Compare Swinburne's *Itylus* with Arnold's poem.





**The Deacon's Masterpiece; or, the  
Wonderful "One-Hoss Shay"**



THE DEACON'S MASTERPIECE; OR, THE  
WONDERFUL "ONE-HOSS SHAY"

No other American poem is so generally misunderstood as Holmes' familiar *One-hoss Shay*. An examination of more than thirty references to it by as many critics and commentators, American and English, shows only one who sees in it anything more than fine fun and excellent Yankee humor. Everybody sees that, enjoys it, and praises it; but Professor Barrett Wendell sees in it also "one of the most pitiless satires in our language."

It is a satire on the logically constructed theology of early New England, especially that theology as formulated by Jonathan Edwards in his great work on *The Freedom of the Will*. As a feat of logical reasoning this work by Jonathan Edwards surpasses anything done by any other American writer. The unbending Calvinistic creed as forged by Edwards seemed unanswerable, and yet, in a hundred years, New England had turned away from it and had gone over very largely to Unitarianism. Edwards' great work was published in 1755 — notice the date. That was the year also of the Lisbon earthquake and the defeat of General Braddock at Fort Duquesne, but these are mere incidents: they have nothing to do with the meaning of the poem, unless Holmes intends for us to think of the publication of Edwards' book as a calamity along with the other calamities of 1755! *The One-hoss Shay* was published almost exactly a hundred years after *The Freedom of the Will*; that is to say, a hundred years after this perfectly constructed

theological creed. Holmes saw that the creed had gone to pieces, and rejoiced in the fact. His father had been a stern adherent of that belief, but he himself was a Unitarian, and he criticised the older creed in prose, in verse, and in speech, offending some, shocking others, but perhaps producing a tonic effect upon all.

All we have to do is to bear in mind that the "Deacon" stands for Jonathan Edwards and that the "Wonderful One-hoss Shay" stands for his system of theology, which was so perfectly constructed "that it couldn't break down" — but did — and we can see in the poem not only the finest flower of Yankee humor but also a satire that has but few equals for merciless keenness.

## THE DEACON'S MASTERPIECE; OR, THE WONDERFUL "ONE-HOSS SHAY"

### A LOGICAL STORY

Have you heard of the wonderful one-hoss shay,  
That was built in such a logical way  
It ran a hundred years to a day,  
And then, of a sudden, it — ah, but stay,  
I'll tell you what happened without delay, —  
Scaring the parson into fits,  
Frightening people out of their wits —  
Have you ever heard of that, I say?  
Seventeen hundred and fifty-five;  
*Georgius Secundus* was then alive —  
Snuffy old drone from the German hive;

That was the year when Lisbon-town  
Saw the earth open and gulp her down,  
And Braddock's army was done so brown,  
Left without a scalp to its crown.  
It was on the terrible Earthquake-day  
That the Deacon finished the one-hoss shay.  
Now in building of chaises, I tell you what,  
There is always *somewhere* a weakest spot —  
In hub, tire, felloe, in spring or thill,  
In panel, or crossbar, or floor, or sill,  
In screw, bolt, thoroughbrace — lurking still;  
Find it somewhere you must and will —  
Above or below, or within or without;  
And that's the reason, beyond a doubt,  
A chaise *breaks down* but doesn't *wear out*.

But the Deacon swore (as Deacons do,  
With an "I-dew vum," or an "I tell yeou")  
He would build one shay to beat the taown  
'n' the keounty 'n' all the kentry raoun';  
It should be so built that it *couldn't* break daown:  
"Fur," said the Deacon, "'t's mighty plain  
Thut the weakes' place mus' stan' the strain;  
'n' the way t' fix it, uz I maintain,

Is only jest

T' make that place uz strong uz the rest."

So the Deacon inquired of the village folk  
Where he could find the strongest oak,  
That couldn't be split nor bent nor broke —

That was for spokes and floors and sills;  
He sent for lancewood to make the thills;  
The crossbars were ash, from the straightest trees;



The panels of white-wood, that cuts like cheese  
But lasts like iron for things like these;  
The hubs of logs from the "Settler's ellum"  
(Last of its timber — they couldn't sell 'em;  
Never an axe had seen their chips,  
And the wedges flew from between their lips,  
Their blunt ends frizzled like celery-tips);  
Step and prop-iron, bolt and screw,  
Spring, tire, axle, and linchpin too,  
Steel of the finest, bright and blue;  
Thoroughbrace, bison-skin thick and wide;  
Boot, top, dasher, from tough old hide  
Found in the pit when the tanner died;  
That was the way he "put her through."  
"There!" said the Deacon, "naow she'll dew!"

Do! I tell you, I rather guess  
She was a wonder, and nothing less!  
Colts grew horses, beards turned gray,  
Deacon and deaconess dropped away,  
Children and grandchildren — where were they?  
But there stood the stout old one-hoss shay  
As fresh as on Lisbon-earthquake day!  
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED; it came and found  
The Deacon's masterpiece strong and sound.  
Eighteen hundred increased by ten;  
"Hahnsum kerridge" they called it then,  
Eighteen hundred and twenty came;  
Running as usual, much the same.  
Thirty and forty at last arrive;  
And then come fifty, and FIFTY-FIVE.

Little of all we value here

Wakes on the morn of its hundredth year  
Without both feeling and looking queer.  
In fact, there's nothing that keeps its youth,  
So far as I know, but a tree and truth.  
(This is a moral that runs at large:  
Take it; you're welcome — no extra charge.)

FIRST OF NOVEMBER — the Earthquake-day;  
There are traces of age in the one-hoss shay,  
A general flavor of mild decay,  
But nothing local, as one may say.  
There couldn't be, for the Deacon's art  
Had made it so like in every part  
That there wasn't a chance for one to start;  
For the wheels were just as strong as the thills,  
And the floor was just as strong as the sills,  
And the panels just as strong as the floor,  
And the whipple-tree neither less nor more,  
And the back-crossbar as strong as the fore,  
And the spring and axle and hub *encore*.  
And yet, *as a whole*, it is past a doubt,  
In another hour it will be *worn out*!

First of November, 'Fifty-five!  
This morning the parson takes a drive:  
Now, small boys, get out of the way!  
Here comes the wonderful one-hoss shay,  
Drawn by a rat-tailed, ewe-necked bay.  
"Huddup!!" said the parson; off went they.  
The parson was working his Sunday's text;  
Had got to *fifthly*, and stopped perplexed  
At what the — Moses — was coming next;  
All at once the horse stood still,

Close by the meet'n'-house on the hill;  
 First a shiver, and then a thrill,  
 Then something decidedly like a spill,  
 And the parson was sitting upon a rock,  
 At half-past nine by the meet'n'-house clock,  
 Just the hour of the Earthquake shock!  
 What do you think the parson found,  
 When he got up and stared around?  
 The poor old chaise in a heap or mound,  
 As if it had been to the mill and ground!  
 You see, of course, if you're not a dunce,  
 How it went to pieces all at once,  
 All at once and nothing first,  
 Just as bubbles do when they burst.

End of the wonderful one-hoss shay.  
 Logic is logic. That's all I say.

— Oliver Wendell Holmes.

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The Lisbon earthquake occurred on the first of November, 1755. The greater part of the city of Lisbon, Portugal, was destroyed. Between 30,000 and 40,000 people lost their lives, and property amounting to \$100,000,000 was destroyed either by the earthquake or by the fire which immediately followed it. The shock was felt from Scotland to Asia Minor.

*Georgius Secundus* (King George II) was of the German House of Hanover, and was thoroughly German in character and habits. He was King of Great Britain from 1727 to 1760.

General Edward Braddock was sent from England with two regiments especially to drive the French and Indians from Fort Duquesne (Pittsburgh). The battle was fought July 9, 1755, on the east side of the Monongahela, seven or eight miles from Fort Duquesne. Braddock's regulars and the colonial militia, under Washington, were defeated and Braddock was killed.

# **Rhoecus**



## RHOECUS

The Greeks believed in many minor divinities, not dwelling on Olympus, but making their homes among men. These are mentioned in the Homeric poems, the oldest portion of Greek literature. They were the Nymphs, and one of the most interesting species of Nymphs were the Dryads or Nymphs of the Trees. They personified vegetable life. In an ancient Homeric hymn they are described as neither goddesses nor women but partaking of the nature of both.

On the high hills  
Lofty they stand; the deathless sacred grove  
Men call them, and with iron never cut.

These beautiful spirits dwelling in the trees had the power to reward or to punish those who befriended or injured the trees in which they dwelt. Many legends grew up about these Dryads of the trees, one of the most beautiful being the legend of Rhoecus or Rhoekos. Keightley tells the tale in prose as follows:

"A man named Rhoekos happening to see an oak just ready to fall to the ground ordered his slaves to prop it up. The Nymph, who had been on the point of perishing with the tree, came to him and expressed her gratitude to him for having saved her life, and at the same time desired him to ask what reward he would. Rhoekos then requested her to permit him to be her lover, and the Nymph acceded to his desire. She at the same time charged him strictly to avoid the society of every other woman, and told him that a bee should be her messenger.

"One time the bee happened to come to Rhoekos as he was playing at draughts (dice) and he made a rough reply. [Another version says he roughly brushed the bee away.] This so incensed the Nymph that she deprived him of his sight."



The Dryads sometimes assumed the forms of shepherdesses, huntresses or peasant girls, but they were supposed to have come into existence with certain trees and to perish with them. They were always surpassingly beautiful. To destroy a tree needlessly was an impious act, sometimes severely punished.

This simple statement of the old nymphology and the old legend of Rhoekos will serve as a background for James Russell Lowell's beautiful poem. Observe that in Lowell's poem the youth is deprived, not of his physical sight, as in the old legend, but of his spiritual sight.

## FROM RHOECUS

\* \* \* \*

A youth named Rhœcus, wandering in the wood,  
Saw an old oak just trembling to its fall,  
And, feeling pity of so fair a tree,  
He propped its gray trunk with admiring care,  
And with a thoughtless footstep loitered on.  
But, as he turned, he heard a voice behind  
That murmured "Rhœcus!" 'T was as if the leaves,  
Stirred by a passing breath, had murmured it,  
And, while he paused bewildered, yet again  
It murmured "Rhœcus!" softer than a breeze.  
He started and beheld with dizzy eyes  
What seemed the substance of a happy dream  
Stand there before him, spreading a warm glow  
Within the green glooms of the shadowy oak.  
It seemed a woman's shape, yet all too fair

To be a woman, and with eyes too meek  
For any that were wont to mate with gods.  
All naked like a goddess stood she there,  
And like a goddess all too beautiful  
To feel the guilt-born earthliness of shame.  
"Rhœcus, I am the Dryad of this tree,"  
Thus she began, dropping her low-toned words  
Serene, and full, and clear, as drops of dew,  
"And with it I am doomed to live and die;  
The rain and sunshine are my caterers,  
Nor have I other bliss than simple life;  
Now ask me what thou wilt, that I can give,  
And with a thankful joy it shall be thine."

Then Rhœcus, with a flutter at the heart,  
Yet, by the prompting of such beauty, bold,  
Answered: "What is there that can satisfy  
The endless craving of the soul but love?  
Give me thy love, or but the hope of that  
Which must be evermore my nature's goal."  
After a little pause she said again,  
But with a glimpse of sadness in her tone,  
"I give it, Rhœcus, though a perilous gift;  
An hour before the sunset meet me here,"  
And straightway there was nothing he could see  
But the green gloom beneath the shadowy oak,  
And not a sound came to his straining ears  
But the low trickling rustle of the leaves,  
And far away upon an emerald slope  
The falter of an idle shepherd's pipe.

Now, in those days of simpleness and faith,  
Men did not think that happy things were dreams  
Because they overstepped the narrow bourn  
Of likelihood, but reverently deemed  
Nothing too wondrous or too beautiful  
To be the guerdon of a daring heart.  
So Rhœcus made no doubt that he was blest,  
And all along unto the city's gate  
Earth seemed to spring beneath him as he walked,  
The clear, broad sky looked bluer than its wont,  
And he could scarce believe he had not wings,  
Such sunshine seemed to glitter through his veins  
Instead of blood, so light he felt and strange.

Young Rhœcus had a faithful heart enough,  
But one that in the present dwelt too much,  
And, taking with blithe welcome whatso'er  
Chance gave of joy, was wholly bound in that,  
Like the contented peasant of a vale,  
Deemed it the world, and never looked beyond.  
So, haply meeting in the afternoon  
Some comrades who were playing at the dice,  
He joined them, and forgot all else beside.

The dice were rattling at the merriest,  
And Rhœcus, who had met but sorry luck,  
Just laughed in triumph at a happy throw,  
When through the room there hummed a yellow bee  
That buzzed about his ear with down-dropped legs  
As if to light. And Rhœcus laughed and said,  
Feeling how red and flushed he was with loss,

“By Venus! does he take me for a rose?”  
And brushed him off with rough, impatient hand.  
But still the bee came back, and thrice again  
Rhœcus did beat him off with growing wrath.  
Then through the window flew the wounded bee,  
And Rhœcus, tracking him with angry eyes,  
Saw a sharp mountain-peak of Thessaly  
Against the red disk of the setting sun,—  
And instantly the blood sank from his heart,  
As if its very walls had caved away.  
Without a word he turned, and, rushing forth,  
Ran madly through the city and the gate,  
And o’er the plain, which now the wood’s long shade,  
By the low sun thrown forward broad and dim,  
Darkened well-nigh unto the city’s wall.

Quite spent and out of breath he reached the tree,  
And, listening fearfully, he heard once more  
The low murmur “Rhœcus!” close at hand:  
Whereat he looked around him, but could see  
Naught but the deepening glooms beneath the oak.  
Then sighed the voice, “O Rhœcus! nevermore  
Shalt thou behold me or by day or night,  
Me, who would fain have blessed thee with a love  
More ripe and bounteous than ever yet  
Filled up with nectar any mortal heart:  
But thou didst scorn my humble messenger,  
And sent’st him back to me with bruised wings.  
We spirits only show to gentle eyes,  
We ever ask an undivided love,  
And he who scorns the least of Nature’s works

Is thenceforth exiled and shut out from all.  
Farewell! for thou canst never see me more."

Then Rhœcus beat his breast, and groaned aloud,  
And cried, "Be pitiful! forgive me yet  
This once, and I shall never need it more!"  
"Alas!" the voice returned, "'t is thou art blind,  
Not I unmerciful; I can forgive,  
But have no skill to heal thy spirit's eyes;  
Only the soul hath power o'er itself."  
With that again there murmured, "Nevermore!"  
And Rhœcus after heard no other sound,  
Except the rattling of the oak's crisp leaves,  
Like the long surf upon a distant shore,  
Raking the sea-worn pebbles up and down.  
The night had gathered round him: o'er the plain  
The city sparkled with its thousand lights,  
And sounds of revel fell upon his ear  
Harshly and like a curse; above the sky,  
With all its bright sublimity of stars,  
Deepened, and on his forehead smote the breeze:  
Beauty was all around him and delight,  
But from that eve he was alone on earth.

—James Russell Lowell.

## **The Shepherd of King Admetus**





## THE SHEPHERD OF KING ADMETUS

*The Shepherd of King Admetus*, by James Russell Lowell, is founded upon a well-known Greek myth. Apollo was one of the chief gods and dwelt on the summit of Mount Olympus. Here among the other gods Apollo made music with his lyre, for he was the divinity of poetry and music and prophecy as well as the god of light. He had a son, Aesculapius, who became so skilled in medicine that in one instance he was able to restore the dead to life. This was resented by Pluto, and at Pluto's request Zeus, the father of all the gods, struck the physician with lightning and killed him. Apollo was indignant at the destruction of his son and slew one of the workmen who had forged the thunderbolt for Zeus. In order to punish Apollo for this deed, Zeus condemned him to serve a mortal for a year (some versions say eight years). Apollo took the form of a shepherd and went into the service of Admetus, king of Thessaly.

Here among the mountains and vales of Thessaly he tended the sheep, played upon his lyre, and spoke words of beauty and mystery. He wore the form of a youth and he went in and out among men and "they made his careless words their law." And after he was dead and gone and the memory of him had grown dim "earth seemed more sweet to live upon, more full of love, because of him."

This shepherd of the king of Thessaly, Apollo the god of light and song, was the world's first poet; and all

true poets since his day have been of his race and blood.

Wordsworth says:

In that fair clime the lonely herdsman, stretched  
On the soft grass through half a summer's day,  
With music lulled his indolent repose;  
And, in some fit of weariness, if he,  
When his own breath was silent, chanced to hear  
A distant strain far sweeter than the sounds  
Which his poor skill could make, his fancy fetched  
Even from the blazing chariot of the Sun  
A beardless youth who touched a golden lute,  
And filled the illumined groves with ravishment.

Lowell's poem is a very happy combination of grace, lightness and seriousness.

#### THE SHEPHERD OF KING ADMETUS

There came a youth upon the earth,  
Some thousand years ago,  
Whose slender hands were nothing worth,  
Whether to plough, or reap, or sow.

Upon an empty tortoise-shell  
He stretched some chords, and drew  
Music that made men's bosoms swell  
Fearless, or brimmed their eyes with dew.

Then King Admetus, one who had  
Pure taste by right divine,  
Decreed his singing not too bad  
To hear between the cups of wine:

And so, well pleased with being soothed  
    Into a sweet half-asleep,  
Three times his kingly beard he smoothed,  
    And made him viceroy o'er his sheep.

His words were simple words enough,  
    And yet he used them so,  
That what in other mouths was rough  
    In his seemed musical and low.

Men called him but a shiftless youth,  
    In whom no good they saw;  
And yet, unwittingly, in truth,  
    They made his careless words their law.

They knew not how he learned at all,  
    For idly, hour by hour,  
He sat and watched the dead leaves fall,  
    Or mused upon a common flower.

It seemed the loveliness of things  
    Did teach him all their use,  
For, in mere weeds, and stones and springs,  
    He found a healing power profuse.

Men granted that his speech was wise,  
    But, when a glance they caught  
Of his slim grace and woman's eyes,  
    They laughed, and called him good-for-naught.

Yet, after he was dead and gone,  
And e'en his memory dim,  
Earth seemed more sweet to live upon,  
More full of love, because of him.

And day by day more holy grew  
Each spot where he had trod,  
Till after-poets only knew  
Their first-born brother as a god.

— James Russell Lowell.

## **The Blessed Damsel**





## THE BLESSED DAMOZEL

Rossetti's *The Blessed Damozel* and Poe's *The Raven* should be read together. In the latter, a man is expressing his mood of hopeless despair over the death of the loved Lenore. Rossetti reverses the situation. *The Blessed Damozel* expresses the longings of a young woman as she leans out from the ramparts of Heaven and waits for her lover, who is still on earth. *The Raven* has no ray of hope. The mood of despair is as black as the emblematic bird that sits on the bust of Pallas over the door. *The Blessed Damozel* is full of sad hope and certain faith — " 'for he will come,' she said."

Rossetti's poem is steeped in medieval religious mysticism. The conception of Heaven, with the angels flying to and fro, the mystic numbers three and seven, the white rose of the saints, Queen Mary and her hand-maidens, is wholly medieval; and to appreciate the poem in all its tender loveliness one must give his imagination full sympathetic play with these old symbols so rich in their associations with the faith of centuries. Yet the realism is sometimes almost startling, so vividly are the concrete details brought before our eyes. The curled moon flutters like a feather far down the gulf of space; each prayer is "like a little cloud," and one sees it melt away, being granted; souls go by "like thin flames"; far below, the earth "spins like a fretful midge"; even the rampart of God's House, with its bar of gold over which the waiting maiden leans, seems to be definitely fixed in place and appearance.

As mysticism and the sense of detailed fact are so strikingly combined, so are the impressions of infinite distance and of nearness. The Blessed Damozel stands over the sheer depths beyond where space begins, so high that looking downward she scarce can see the sun, and the paths of the angels are vague in distant spheres, and yet the lover lying under the tree on earth is so near that he can see her smiles and hear her tears. With such consummate art are these impressions of distance and nearness combined that the perspective is always true.

But even more worthy of study and of admiration than the combination of mysticism with realism or the blending of the feeling of infinite distance with the sense of nearness is the portrayal of human love in the courts of Heaven. As pure as the angels it is—as pure as Mary and her saints—and yet it is the very love where-with the Blessed Damozel had loved when she and her lover went hand in hand upon the earth—the same love, only grown stronger and purer. Notice how the sense of its beauty, its purity, and its strength makes her brave to say that when he comes she will take him by the hand and lead him straight to the very throne of God. As infinite space and a little patch of earth meet in this poem, so do love immortal and human love. Not even Dante has portrayed the divine passion with more boldness or more delicacy.

And so we may say that although the poem is as it were a mystic vision from out the Middle Ages, it touches the very springs of life and love to-day. It is universal. Whether human love shall have the power

to "carry over" beyond the gold bar of the ramparts of Heaven, is a question very close to the most vital interests of every man's life.

The poem is eminently pictorial, as many of its author's poems are. For Rossetti was a painter as well as a poet, and one of his large pictures has for its subject *The Blessed Damozel*. Indeed he has two pictures illustrating this theme. The figure, the Blessed Damozel, is life-size. She is clad in a garment of pale green and her hair is deep gold. Below the bar on which she leans are two angels, with wings of light reddish purple, holding branches of palm. In the background are countless figures of lovers, re-united. These are omitted from Rossetti's replica of the original picture. In a lower panel of the picture, the lover lies under a tree, his head resting on his hand. He is looking up expectantly. A sword rests by his side in medieval knightly fashion.

The reader will, of course, not fail to notice that the lines in parentheses are always the words of the lover on earth, and not of the Blessed Damozel, and that the "ripe corn" in the beautiful figure of the second stanza is the English use of the word corn, meaning wheat. The "Dove" in the fifteenth stanza is the Holy Spirit.

Stopford Brooke says: "It is a lovely thing, as exquisite in tenderness and sublimated thought as it is in form and finish. He was only twenty when he wrote it, and his art is as true and fine in it as in the best of the later sonnets. So swiftly does genius grow to its full height. The subject is noble and appeals to universal feeling. No one who has loved and lost, and waits here

below, or there above, but must have cherished its main thought and felt its main emotion. The ornament is beautiful, and is charged with human feeling. It is not the work of fancy but of imagination piercing with vital power into the heart of the subject, and radiating new thought, new feeling, through every verse, even every line."

## THE BLESSED DAMOZEL

The blessed damozel leaned out  
From the gold bar of Heaven;  
Her eyes were deeper than the depth  
Of waters stilled at even;  
She had three lilies in her hand, 5  
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,  
No wrought flowers did adorn,  
But a white rose of Mary's gift,  
For service meetly worn; 10  
Her hair that lay along her back  
Was yellow like ripe corn.

Her seemed she scarce had been a day  
One of God's choristers;  
The wonder was not yet quite gone 15  
From that still look of hers;  
Albeit, to them she left, her day  
Had counted as ten years.

(To one, it is ten years of years.  
. . . Yet now, and in this place,  
Surely she leaned o'er me — her hair  
Fell all about my face. . . .  
Nothing: the autumn fall of leaves.  
The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house 25  
That she was standing on;  
By God built over the sheer depth  
The which is Space begun;  
So high, that looking downward thence  
She scarce could see the sun. 30

It lies in Heaven, across the flood  
Of ether, as a bridge.  
Beneath, the tides of day and night  
With flame and darkness ridge  
The void, as low as where this earth  
Spins like a fretful midge.

Around her, lovers, newly met  
'Mid deathless love's acclaims,  
Spoke evermore among themselves  
Their heart-remembered names;  
And the souls mounting up to God  
Went by her like thin flames.

40

And still she bowed herself and stooped  
Out of the circling charm;  
Until her bosom must have made

45



The bar she leaned on warm,  
And the lilies lay as if asleep  
Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of Heaven she saw  
Time like a pulse shake fierce 50  
Through all the world. Her gaze still strove  
Within the gulf to pierce  
It's path; and now she spoke as when  
The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now; the curlèd moon 55  
Was like a little feather  
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now  
She spoke through the still weather.  
Her voice was like the voice the stars  
Had when they sang together. 60

(Ah sweet! Even now, in that bird's song,  
Strove not her accents there,  
Fain to be hearkened? When those bells  
Possessed the mid-day air,  
Strove not her steps to reach my side 65  
Down all the echoing stair?)

"I wish that he were come to me,  
For he will come," she said.  
"Have I not prayed in Heaven? — on earth,  
Lord, Lord, has he not prayed? 70  
Are not two prayers a perfect strength?  
And shall I feel afraid?

“When round his head the aureole clings,  
And he is clothed in white,  
I’ll take his hand and go with him 75  
To the deep wells of light;  
As unto a stream we will step down,  
And bathe there in God’s sight.

“We two will stand beside that shrine,  
Occult, withheld, untrod, 80  
Whose lamps are stirred continually  
With prayer sent up to God;  
And see our old prayers, granted, melt  
Each like a little cloud.

“We two will lie i’ the shadow of 85  
That living mystic tree  
Within whose secret growth the Dove  
Is sometimes felt to be,  
While every leaf that His plumes touch  
Saith His Name audibly. 90

“And I myself will teach to him,  
I myself, lying so,  
The songs I sing here; which his voice  
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,  
And find some knowledge at each pause, 95  
Or some new thing to know.”

(Alas! We two, we two, thou say’st!  
Yea, one wast thou with me  
That once of old. But shall God lift

- To endless unity 100  
The soul whose likeness with thy soul  
Was but its love for thee?)
- “We two,” she said, “will seek the groves  
Where the lady Mary is,  
With her five handmaidens, whose names 105  
Are five sweet symphonies,  
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,  
Margaret, and Rosalys.
- “Circlewise sit they, with bound locks  
And foreheads garlanded, 110  
Into the fine cloth, white like flame,  
Weaving the golden thread,  
To fashion the birth-robcs for them  
Who are just born, being dead.
- “He shall fear, haply, and be dumb: 115  
Then will I lay my cheek  
To his, and tell about our love,  
Not once abashed or weak;  
And the dear Mother will approve  
My pride, and let me speak. 120
- “Herself shall bring us, hand in hand  
To Him round whom all souls  
Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads  
Bowed with their aureoles:  
And angels meeting us shall sing 125  
To their citherns and citoles.

“There will I ask of Christ the Lord  
Thus much for him and me:—  
Only to live as once on earth  
With Love, only to be, 130  
As then awhile, forever now  
Together, I and he.”

She gazed and listened and then said,  
Less sad of speech than mild,—  
“All this is when he comes.” She ceased. 135  
The light thrilled towards her, fill’d  
With angels in strong level flight.  
Her eyes prayed, and she smil’d.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path  
Was vague in distant spheres: 140  
And then she cast her arms along  
The golden barriers,  
And laid her face between her hands,  
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

— Dante Gabriel Rossetti.



## **A Group of Sonnets**





## A GROUP OF SONNETS

Do you know what to look for when you read a sonnet? A sonnet is a complete lyric of fourteen rhymed lines, each line containing five time-units or *feet*, composed of alternately unaccented and accented syllables. Such a line or verse is called *iambic pentameter*. The grouping and lining of these fourteen lines depends upon whether the sonnet is of the "Italian type" or of the "English type," for there are two distinct sonnet-forms in English literature — besides many variations which will not be discussed here. Before one can read a sonnet intelligently one must know the nature and purpose of the sonnet-form to which it belongs.

What is known as the Italian sonnet-form consists of fourteen lines divided into two groups, the first of eight lines (called the octave) and the second of six lines (called the sestet). The whole poem contains a single idea or emotion, but at the end of the octave there is a distinct turn or change in this idea or emotion. The octave sometimes presents a situation and the sestet a comment; or they may be a fact and an application; or a problem and a solution; or a premise and a conclusion. Whatever we may call them, the flow and ebb of the main current of the poem are distinctly marked, the tone of the last group of six lines being different from the first group of eight lines. In reading a sonnet of this type one should look for this division in its structure and this change in its tone. The arrangement of the

rhymes in the first group is always the same; in the second group it may vary slightly.

The Italian form of the sonnet may be seen to good effect in Wordsworth's *It Is a Beauteous Evening*. The octave (the first eight lines) describes a tranquil and brooding evening by the sea. The sestet (the last six lines) is a tribute to the poet's sister Dorothy, suggested by the influence of the scene upon himself. It is a situation and a comment. The emotional strain of the poem is continuous, but there is a turn in it at the division between octave and sestet. The flow and the return are very distinct. In the first part the reflective nature of the poet is revealed, in the second part the childlike nature of his sister.

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free;  
The holy time is quiet as a nun  
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun  
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;  
The gentleness of heaven is on the sea;  
Listen! the mighty being is awake  
And doth with his eternal motion make  
A sound like thunder — everlastingly.

Dear child! dear girl that walkest with me here,  
If thou appear untouch'd by solemn thought  
Thy nature is not therefore less divine:  
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year,  
And worship'st at the Temple's inner shrine,  
God being with thee when we know it not.

— William Wordsworth.

In Milton's noble sonnet on his blindness, the rhetorical division occurs in the middle of the eighth line. The octave presents the situation: his blindness; the sestet, the philosophical comment: service through waiting. There is one central idea or emotional strain, but it has two movements: the flow of the octave and the return of the sestet.

When I consider how my light is spent  
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,  
And that one talent which is death to hide  
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent  
To serve therewith my Maker, and present  
My true account, lest he returning chide —  
Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?  
I fondly ask: — But patience, to prevent

That murmur, soon replies; God doth not need  
Either man's work, or his own gifts: who best  
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best: His state  
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed  
And post o'er land and ocean without rest: —  
They also serve who only stand and wait.  
— John Milton.

A slight variation of the Italian form is found in Keats's *Grasshopper and Cricket*. The continuous theme of the persistence of poetry on earth is developed in two separate applications or illustrations, one in the octave and one in the sestet. It is a twofold expression of the same thought; and yet the latter division may be said to

contain a comment upon the former in the statement that the cricket's song reminds one of the grasshopper's song among the grassy hills.

The poetry of earth is never dead:

When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,  
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run  
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead;  
That is the Grasshopper's — he takes the lead  
In summer luxury,— he has never done  
With his delights; for when tired out with fun  
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.

The poetry of earth is ceasing never:

On a lone winter evening, when the frost  
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills  
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,  
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,  
The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

— John Keats.

Rossetti's powerful lyric called *Lost Days* is a perfect example of the pure Italian sonnet-form. In the first eight lines he imagines his lost days lying in the street as they fell, and asks, if he could see them, would they be wheat or coins or drops of blood or spilt water?

The comment or application follows in the concluding six lines, and the reader perceives that the tone is distinctly different. Each day is a murdered self that cries aloud through all eternity. The flow and ebb in the wave of thought are presented with striking artistic effect.



The lost days of my life until to-day,  
What were they, could I see them on the street  
Lie as they fell? Would they be ears of wheat  
Sown once for food but trodden into clay?  
Or golden coins squandered and still to pay?  
Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet?  
Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat  
The undying throats of Hell, athirst alway?

I do not see them here; but after death  
God knows I know the faces I shall see,  
Each one a murdered self, with low last breath.  
“I am thyself,— what hast thou done to me?”  
“And I — and I — thyself,” (lo! each one saith)  
“And thou thyself to all eternity!”

— Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

(Compare this sonnet, in both form and substance, with Emerson's *Days*.)

The other type of sonnet is called the English or the Shakespearean form. Here the fourteen lines are divided into three groups of four lines each (quatrains), and a couplet. Each of these quatrains presents a more or less distinct thought, and the concluding two lines (couplet) bind them all together — there is a gradual rise of emotion and thought to an epigrammatic climax in the last two lines. Thus the whole poem leaves a single impression, just as the Italian sonnet-form does. In the Shakespearean sonnet the verses rhyme as follows: first and third, second and fourth, and so on — up to the last two which rhyme with each other.



Shakespeare's beautiful 73rd Sonnet illustrates admirably the type of sonnet called the English, or the Shakespearean form. The general theme is love or friendship in old age. The idea of old age is presented in three different comparisons. The first quatrain is a picture of autumn with its naked boughs from which the singing birds have departed. The second quatrain is a description of twilight and the approaching night. In the third group of four lines a dying fire is shown on its death-bed of ashes. Then comes the final couplet binding the whole poem into a unit with the thought —

This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong,  
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

That time of year thou may'st in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,  
Bare ruin's choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

In me thou seest the twilight of such day  
As after sunset fadeth in the west,  
Which by and by black night doth take away,  
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.

In me thou seest the glowing of such fire,  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie  
As the deathbed whereon it must expire,  
Consumed with that which it was nourish'd by:

— This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more  
strong,

To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

— William Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's famous 29th Sonnet has for its theme the consolation of love or friendship. The mood of despair is presented through different comparisons and with deepening intensity to the middle of the third quatrain, when there comes a sudden burst of joy like the singing of a lark at heaven's gate. The explanation comes in the closing couplet, which gives unity to the poem and serves also as an epigrammatic climax.

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes  
I all alone beweepe my outcast state,  
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,  
And look upon myself and curse my fate;

Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
Featured like him, like him with friends possest,  
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,  
With what I most enjoy contented least;

Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,  
Haply I think on Thee — and then my state,  
Like to the lark at break of day arising  
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;

For thy sweet love remember'd, such wealth brings  
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

— William Shakespeare.

By reading aloud these examples of the two typical sonnet-forms, one can test for himself the statement made by Theodore Watts Dunton that the purpose of the Italian form is to produce a certain melodic effect on the ear, and that "the quest of the Shakespearean sonnet is sweetness."

Because of the brevity of the sonnet, much more is suggested than expressed; hence it calls for the use of our imagination. There is but one idea, but it nearly always has far-reaching suggestions. Some of the greatest poems in English literature are in this form, some of the great minds choosing it to express the concentrated passion of their lives. "A sonnet is like a cameo, rich in material, and delicate and conventional in detail."

**Biographical Notes of the Authors  
Represented**



BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES OF THE AUTHORS  
REPRESENTED

**Arnold, Matthew.**—Born at Laleham, England, 1822, and was buried there 1888. His father was Dr. Thomas Arnold, the famous head master of Rugby. Arnold was educated at Winchester and Rugby and at Balliol College, Oxford. After teaching at Rugby for a short time he was appointed inspector of schools under the government, and served with unflinching faithfulness for thirty-five years. For ten years of this time he was also Professor of Poetry at Oxford. Arnold is famous, not only as a great poet, but also as a great critic. His poetry expresses the spiritual unrest of the age with rare grace and power, and is characterized by classic restraint and perfection. Read *Dover Beach*, *The Scholar Gypsy*, *Philomela*, *Rugby Chapel*, *Sorab and Rustum*, *Thyrsis*, and *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*. As the student's literary taste improves, his liking for Arnold increases.

**Browning, Robert.**—Born May 7, 1812, at Camberwell, England. He was educated privately, devoted himself wholly to literature, and died in 1889, in Italy, where he spent much of his life. His wife was Elizabeth Barrett Browning, also a distinguished poet. Browning's fame came slowly, his genius was much disputed by critics, and for a long time he was ignored by the public. His language is eccentric and sometimes obscure, but his thought is deep and subtle; and Brown-



ing and Tennyson stand side by side as the great poets of the latter part of the nineteenth century. His theme is always the human soul, generally studied under exceptional circumstances. *The Ring and the Book, Pippa Passes, My Last Duchess, Prospice, Saul, Rabbi Ben Ezra, The Laboratory, Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came, Abt Vogler, The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church, and Andrea del Sarto*, are some of the great things written by him.

**Burns, Robert.**—Born January 25, 1759, in Ayrshire, Scotland, the son of a small farmer. The family was poor and the son received but little regular education; he was “a hardworked plowboy.” But he was a great reader, having a book before him even at meal times. He early began writing songs of country life that attracted attention, and he was recognized and lionized, as a real genius. In 1789 he was appointed exciseman for the government. He died July 21, 1796, only thirty-seven years of age, having led a life mixed of misery, remorse, and happiness, his few peaceful years being those he lived as a farmer in Dumfrieshire with his wife, Jean Armour. Like Poe, although his life was miserable, his fame is immortal. His love songs are among the finest ever written. *The Cotter's Saturday Night, Tam O'Shanter, The Twa Dogs, To a Mountain Daisy, To a Mouse, To Mary in Heaven, Highland Mary, Ye Banks and Braes O' Bonnie Doon, Flow Gently Sweet Afton, O My Luve's like a Red Red Rose, Scots wha hae wi' Wallace Bled, and Is There for Honest Poverty*, are the glory of Scotland's literature.

**Byron, George Gordon (Lord).**—Born in London, January 22, 1788, and died of a fever at Missolonghi, Greece, October 19, 1824, while aiding the Greeks to free themselves from Turkish despotism. By birth he was entitled to a seat in the English House of Lords, but he spent his life in travel and in writing. His first book of poems, *Hours of Idleness*, was ridiculed by critics, but he lived to see himself the most famous author in all Europe, although he died at thirty-six. His personality as much as his literary genius contributed to the spell which he threw over the world. Proud, passionate, handsome, fascinating, he captivated all who came within his reach. The story of his own exploits was as interesting to the public as anything he wrote. After his death his fame greatly diminished, but his place in the literary world is still a large one. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *Don Juan* are his greatest productions. His greatest dramas are *Manfred* and *Cain*. Among his shorter poems *The Prisoner of Chillon*, *The Destruction of Sennacherib*, *She Walks in Beauty*, *To Thomas Moore*, are representative.

**Cowper, William.**—Born 1731 and died 1800. His name is inseparably associated with the little English midland village of Olney, though as a law student he lived in London. He was a gentle and religious spirit, depressed by melancholy. He had fits of insanity and he attempted suicide, but he had also a fine touch of humor, as everybody knows from his amusing ballad *John Gilpin's Ride*. His own line —

I was a stricken deer that left the herd long since —

is the very essence of pathos. His longest poem is *The Task*, but his best poems are *Lines on Receipt of My Mother's Picture*, *Loss of the Royal George*, *To Mary*, and *The Castaway* — the last being a cry of despair.

**Dryden, John.**—Born in Northamptonshire, England, 1606, educated at Cambridge, and died, 1687. He was the greatest literary figure of the Restoration Period. He was critic, poet, dramatist, and the founder of modern prose. His poems, mostly satirical, are not generally read to-day except by students, but *Alexander's Feast* and one or two others still hold their place in popular favor. He represented the spirit of his age, and his masterful mind sums up for us its whole mental temper. His artistic skill and literary quality at their best may be seen in the ode *Alexander's Feast* in this volume.

**Emerson, Ralph Waldo.**—Born May 25, 1803, in Boston, where he resided for thirty years, and died April 27, 1882, at Concord, where his home was the literary centre of America. He was graduated from Harvard in 1821, and some years later from the Harvard Divinity School. For a few years he engaged in the active ministry of the Unitarian Church in Boston. The rest of his life was devoted to lecturing, writing and thinking, with three visits to Europe. He was our greatest seer and our most original thinker. Perhaps America has produced no finer mind than his. His writings are of two classes — essays and poems, for his lectures are really essays. Such poems as *The Problem*, *The Rhodora*, *The Concord Hymn*, *Each and All*, *Brahma*, *The Snow Storm*, *Good Bye*, *Wood Notes*, and *Terminus* are im-

mortal. Among his greatest essays are *Nature*, *The American Scholar*, *Self-Reliance*, *Friendship*, *Compensation*, *History*, and *Character*. No other writer has so enriched American thought; no other writer has had such influence upon the best minds of the country.

**Goldsmith, Oliver.**—Born in County Longford, Ireland, 1728, spent most of his life in London, and died there 1774. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and at Edinburgh, studied medicine, wandered about on the Continent, and tried his hand at many things. When he took up authorship for a livelihood he did much hack work, but he found time to add to the glory of English literature by writing *The Traveller*, *The Deserted Village*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *The Good-Natured Man*, and *She Stoops to Conquer*. *The Vicar* was one of the earliest of English novels and is still a prime favorite, while *She Stoops to Conquer* still pleases thousands from the amateur or the regular stage.

**Gray, Thomas.**—Born 1716, died 1771, and was buried at Stoke Poges in Buckinghamshire, the scene of his famous *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*. Most of his life he lived as a scholar and a recluse at Cambridge University, and he was the greatest scholar among the English writers of his time. He wrote very little, but his intellectual interests were of wide range, covering ancient and modern literature, music, painting, architecture, and natural science. His *Elegy* is the most popular poem in the English language. Other important poems are *The Progress of Poesy*, *On a Distant Prospect of Eaton College*, and *The Bard*.



**Herrick, Robert.**—Born 1591 in London, but spent most of his life as vicar of a country church in Devonshire. His poems mostly deal with the simple merry-makings of country life, but some of them are of a religious character. The joy of unspoiled rural living is the dominant note in his most exquisite lyrics, for he seems to have dwelt always in Arcadia. *Corinna's Going a-Maying*, *Night Piece to Julia*, and *Gather Ye Rosebuds* are among his best. *The Litany* is doubtless the masterpiece among his religious poems. Herrick died 1674, at the age of 83.

**Holmes, Oliver Wendell.**—Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, August 29, 1809, and died in Boston in 1894. He was educated at Harvard, graduating there in the famous class of 1829. For thirty-five years he was professor of anatomy and physiology in that institution. He was a poet, an essayist, a novelist, a man of science, a wit, a humorist, a teacher — and famous in everything he tried. His writings are the best representation in our literature of the cultured life of Boston. "He was the laureate of Harvard and of Boston." In poetry his best work is *The Chambered Nautilus*, *The Last Leaf*, *Old Ironsides*, *The One-Hoss Shay*, and *The Living Temple*. His informal essays are grouped in the Autocrat Series — *The Autocrat at the Breakfast Table*, *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, *The Poet at the Breakfast Table*, and *Over the Teacups*. The latter was written when he was eighty years of age. His novels are *Elsie Venner*, *The Guardian Angel*, and *A Mortal Antipathy*, all dealing with the problem of heredity. Holmes was not a

profound or original thinker, but he knew many sides of life remarkably well and he told what he knew with great grace and polish.

**Keats, John.**—Born in London, October 29, 1795. Was apprenticed for five years to a surgeon, but took to verse-making and abandoned the profession of surgery. His health was not robust and in 1820 he went to Italy. He died there in 1821 of consumption and was buried in the Protestant cemetery at Rome. Although he died at twenty-five Matthew Arnold classes him with Shakespeare. Certainly so great a name in poetry was never made so young. There is nothing greater of their kind in English literature than the *Ode to a Nightingale*, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, *To Autumn*, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and *Lamia*.

**Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth.**—Born at Portland, Maine, February 27, 1807, was graduated from Bowdoin College in 1825, studied for the next three years in France, Spain, Italy, and Germany, taught modern languages for five years at Bowdoin, again studied two years abroad, and then began his work as professor of modern languages at Harvard, which he continued until 1854. From that date until his death, in Cambridge, in 1882, he devoted himself to literary work. While abroad and during his career as a college professor he wrote much in both verse and prose. He is the most widely read of American poets, standing supreme as the poet of the heart and the home. He added beauty, grace, sentiment and European culture to American



poetry. *Evangeline, Hiawatha, The Courtship of Miles Standish, The Rainy Day, The Skeleton in Armor, Excelsior, The Village Blacksmith, The Psalm of Life, the Old Clock on the Stairs, The Arrow and the Song, The Day Is Done, Paul Revere's Ride, The Building of the Ship, The Bridge and The Wreck of the Hesperus*, are some of his poems that are familiar everywhere.

**Lowell, James Russell.**—Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, February 22, 1819, in the old mansion at Elmwood, where he passed his life and where he died in 1891. He was graduated from Harvard in 1838. In 1840 he was admitted to the bar, but never practiced, for he at once devoted himself to literature. For twenty years, beginning in 1857, he was professor of modern languages at Harvard, succeeding Longfellow. Like Longfellow he had prepared himself by studying abroad. He was one of the founders, and for the first five years editor, of the *Atlantic Monthly*, and later was one of the editors of the *North American Review*. In 1877 he was appointed Minister to Spain, and in 1880 was transferred to London. Lowell was our greatest literary critic, one of our greatest scholars, and in some respects our greatest poet. At his death in 1891 he was generally considered the foremost citizen of the country. *The Vision of Sir Launfal, The Biglow Papers, A Fable for Critics, The Commemoration Ode, Under the Willows, The First Snow Fall, An Indian Summer Reverie, Under the Old Elm, Rhoecus* and *The Cathedral* represent his best poetry. His *Essays in Criticism* are the high water mark of American criticism.

**Milton, John.**—Born in Bread Street, London, December 9, 1608, and died in that city, 1674. Next to Shakespeare he was the greatest of English poets. He was educated at Cambridge, where he made his determination to be a poet and to devote his time wholly to lofty themes. Twenty years of his life were spent in a pamphlet war on the civil and religious abuses of his time, and as Latin secretary to Cromwell's government, but *Comas*, *Lycidas*, *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso* had established his fame. When his "duties as a patriot" were done he turned to *Paradise Lost* and made the greatest epic in the language. It was published in 1667. This was followed by *Paradise Regained*. Both of these were written when he was totally blind. Milton's whole life is a great epic in itself, and a study of it thrills one with admiration for the life he lived no less than for the sublime poetry which he wrote.

**Rossetti, Dante Gabriel.**—Born in London 1828, of three-fourths Italian and one-fourth English blood, educated at Oxford, died 1882. He was eminent both as a painter and as a poet. Many of his poems are full of medieval charm, and they all have striking pictorial qualities. *The Blessed Damozel*, *Sister Helen*, and *The King's Tragedy* are his best. Rossetti had remarkable command of the sonnet form; this is shown in his *The House of Life*, a hundred and one sonnets dealing with love. His personality was exceptionally attractive and commanding, and he was one of the most interesting figures of his time.

**Shakespeare, William.**—Born at Stratford-on-Avon, England, April 23, 1564, and died there April 23, 1616. He attended a school of academic grade. In 1582 he married Anne Hathaway, daughter of a neighboring farmer. In 1585 he went to London, where for twenty years he made his home, employed in some capacity at one of the playhouses, later as a member of the company, and in writing his immortal dramas. He played principal parts in his own dramas, which followed one another in rapid succession. He returned to Stratford-on-Avon about 1610 or 1612 in good circumstances. Shakespeare's name is the greatest in English letters. *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Lear* are a part of the thought of the English-speaking world. He was buried in the parish church at Stratford, and his tomb bears this inscription, written by himself:

"Good friend for Jesus sake forbear  
To dig the dust enclosed here;  
Blest be the man that spares these stones  
And curst be he that moves my bones."

**Shelley, Percy Bysshe.**—Born 1792, the son of Sir Timothy Shelley of the county of Sussex, England, and was drowned 1822 in the Gulf of Leghorn on the Mediterranean. His body was burned on the shore, Lord Byron and other friends being present, and his ashes were buried near the grave of Keats in the little Protestant cemetery in Rome. Shelley studied at Eton and Oxford, but was expelled from Oxford because of a tract on atheism. He was the poet of humanity in revolt, and he was the most gifted lyric poet that England has pro-

duced. Though reviled during his lifetime, his fame now "fills the earth." *Ode to the West Wind*, *The Cloud*, *Alastor*, *Arethusa*, *Stanzas Written in Dejection near Naples*, *Prometheus Unbound*, and *Adonais* (in memory of Keats) give an idea of the wonderful world of imagination in which Shelley lived.

**Tennyson, Alfred (Lord).**—Born August 6, 1809, at Somersby, England, educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and devoted his whole life to poetry. His reputation grew steadily. In 1850 he became Poet Laureate. Three years later he took up his residence at Farringford in the Isle of Wight, which was his home the rest of his life. In 1883 he was raised to the Peerage. The story of his life is simple, but for more than half a century "he held the poetic supremacy almost unchallenged," and his name is one of the half dozen chief names in English poetry. He died October 6, 1892, and was buried with unequaled solemnity by the side of Chaucer in Westminster Abbey. He was the most representative poet of the last half of the 19th century. His greatest poems are *The Idylls of the King*, *In Memoriam*, *Locksley Hall*, *The Palace of Art*, *The Lotus-Eaters*, *The Brook*, *Sir Galahad*, *Break, Break, Break*, *Ulysses*, *The Vision of Sin*, and *Crossing the Bar*.

**Wordsworth, William.**—Born 1770 at Cockermouth on the Derwent in the county of Cumberland, England, and died 1850 at Rydal Mount in the Lake District and was buried at Grasmere. He was the greatest of the English nature poets, the poet of the new democracy, and, in his own sphere, the greatest of English bards. He



was supremely the poet of nature as Shakespeare was the poet of man. He was educated at Cambridge, visited France during the time of the Revolution, returned to England and settled in the beautiful Lake District, where he lived the most of his life. His genius was influenced by his sister Dorothy, by Coleridge, and by nature. In him we have a great example of plain living and high thinking. Such poems as *The Solitary Reaper*, *The Daffodils*, *Tintern Abbey*, *Ode on Immortality*, *She Was a Phantom of Delight*, *Michael*, *To Duty*, and many of his sonnets add immortal glory to English poetry. His two long poems, *The Prelude* and *The Excursion*, contain many sandy patches, together with much superb poetry. He was made Poet Laureate in 1843. The little volume by him and Coleridge called *Lyrical Ballads* and published in 1798, marks the beginning of a new era — the second great creative period — in English literature.





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"Language-change is not always language-growth —but is often mistaken for growth. Language will change as human interests change. No one should wish to restrict its elasticity or retard its normal growth; but we should see to it, that it does not over-run the fair garden of the soul in wild, uncultivated profusion . . . . Our language is virtually a thing of life. Each one of us owes it a precise duty. No one has a right to sin against his mother tongue, and no one should be excused for so doing. Our words of daily use deserve and demand the same hygienic cleanliness that our persons deserve and demand. Beauty demands that they shall not be mutilated; utility demands that they shall not be confused; decency demands that they shall not be degraded; justice assures them consideration. It is as important to conserve the integrity and morality of words, as of peoples; indeed, the morality in one case may largely depend upon that of the other. Clean speech is as wholesome as fine linen. Careful speech is a form of real etiquette. Beautiful words are better than royal purples . . . ."

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<p>The White Island (<i>Britain</i>)          The Aborigines          English          Early English          Changing Values          Language-Change          The Soul of Words          Poetry and Its "Thread-            bare" Themes          Syntax and a word with            Professor Lounsbury          Intensives</p>	<p>Variations in Word-meanings          Style          Distinctions in Word-mean-            ings          Some Further Distinctions          The Origin of Language          Some Old Celtic Friends          English Orthography          Words Which Have Chang-            ed Since Shakspeare Wrote  <i>The Tragedie of Macbeth</i>          Common-place Poetry</p>
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# Choose Your Words

BY

ESSIE BOCK

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Choose your words, is the advice I offer not alone to several thousand tyros, but to every writer big and little who does not possess THE WORTH OF WORDS.

We are indebted to Ralcy Husted Bell for many beautiful poems; but nothing that he has ever written is of more value than THE WORTH OF WORDS. This book should be the means of correcting much slipshod English, not only among students of writing, but among persons of every class; for it is not written in a lacklustre style which appeals to one merely from a sense of duty. It is a book of knowledge which entertains. The chapter on *Slang* is as good as a page from LIFE.

Now let me explain my presumption in offering this advice to the literati. Being still only at the foot of the writers' ladder, unsupported advice from me would have little weight and no authority. Therefore I offer a few citations which I think will prove that I am not far wrong in saying that no one who writes should be without a copy of this book.

In the COSMOPOLITAN for August one of our foremost authors "walked past" painted store-fronts. Don't hug your dictionary; for your dictionary tells you much that has no place in good English. Many of us speak *American*, but when we write, we must use *English*.

This same writer used the expression *healthy camp* for *healthful camp*. It is obvious that he should have said, *walked by* instead of *walked past* those store-fronts.

In the August number of GOOD HOUSEKEEPING a well known writer says "have got." Now, if you *got* something yesterday you may still *have* it to-day. You might as well say that you *had got* it yesterday as you *have got* it to-day. *Have*, alone, denotes possession; and if you *have* a thing you *got* it somehow, didn't you?

To return to the magazine writers. In the COSMOPOLITAN I read: "She experienced her first loneliness." *Experience* used as a verb is poor taste. I will not go into details—THE WORTH OF WORDS does that. But how much better it would have been to say: "She suffered her first loneliness," or, "passed through her

first loneliness." *Experience* here should palpably be displaced by *suffer*. There was a time when I might have said *replaced* in a similar instance. But *replace* means to put back, while it is only required to force *experience* out by substituting a clearer term.

One of our authors praised as a "born master of English" uses "hoses" as the plural of hose. And he got it printed! Where was the proof-reader? So, *wage* is often used, although *wages* is singular.

Another of our well known authors, who seems proud of his simplicity of expression, in a recent book of Essays uses "gubernatorial" and "humanitarian" and "presidential" and other words of the same class. *Gubernatorial* and *presidential* are incorrectly formed. See THE WORTH OF WORDS. As to *humanitarian*, no other word is more shamefully misused than this. A *humane* person is not necessarily a *humanitarian*. For, as Dr. Bell taught me, a humanitarian means "one who denies the godhead of Jesus Christ, and insists upon his human nature." I can see no reason why there should not be *humane* Christians, and I have no doubt that there are cruel humanitarians. We should have some linguistic means of separating the sheep from the goats.

Ralcy Husted Bell says that pedants and "small potatoes" are prone to use this class of words. For one, I agree with him; and, for one, I protest against ambiguity in the use of words just as I should protest against personal slovenliness. We need clear and clean speech as well as good clothes and sweet linen.

There are any number of words in daily misuse by newspaper writers and book authors, such as *telegram*, *mutual*, *unique*, *affable*, *allude* etc., etc. And many other words, which are not words, are habitually placed in good society where they do not belong.

THE WORTH OF WORDS, is a short-cut to good English. The price of the volume will not stand in the way of anyone who needs it. On one's desk it serves as an excellent disinfectant of diseased English. It is also a stimulant to taste in the choice of good words. I am grateful to Dr. Bell for THE WORTH OF WORDS and his other two books (listed below).

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